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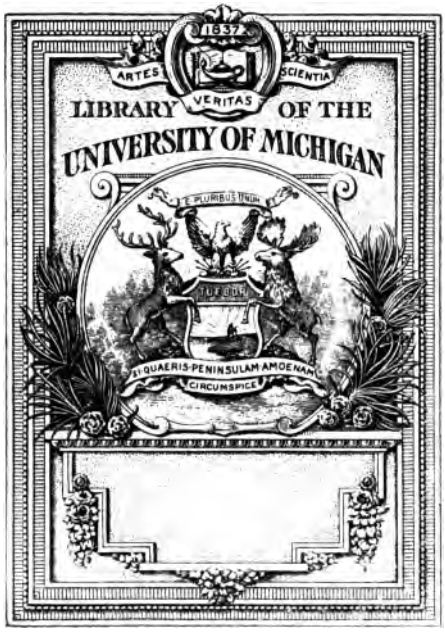
# RELIGION.

*Spencer,*

*Harrison,*

*D' Alviella.*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THE

# NATURE AND REALITY

OF

# RELIGION.

## A Controversy

BETWEEN

FREDERIC HARRISON AND HERBERT SPENCER.

*With an Introduction, Notes,*

AND

*an Appendix on*

THE RELIGIOUS VALUE OF THE UNKNOWABLE

By COUNT D'ALVIELLA.

NEW YORK:
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# PREFACE.

THE recent controversy between Frederic Harrison and Herbert Spencer concerning religion, which appeared in the "Nineteenth Century" and "The Popular Science Monthly," has attracted wide attention both in Europe and this country, and has been much called for in the separate form in which it now appears. This is not surprising, as the subject is one of profound interest, and is treated by men of representative positions and of great ability.

But we are very little concerned with the discussion, merely as a personal polemic. This volume has been prepared because of the light it throws upon a subject of much moment, by which many minds are deeply stirred at the present time. The views put forth by Herbert Spencer on religion, many years ago, have been much misunderstood and much misrepresented, while he has been in a position very unfavorable for defending them. They are now attacked, and in some important respects still further misconstrued, by one of the most brilliant and skillful of English writers, and one, moreover, whose especial studies give authority to his utterances; and, as

Mr. Spencer has here come forward to the explanation and defense of his views more prominently than ever before, we think it desirable to give wide circulation to the controversy in a shape most favorable for forming a judgment upon it. The book, moreover, has been edited with a view of still further interpreting and vindicating the religious doctrines of Mr. Spencer. An introduction, some notes, and an appendix, have been added, which, it is hoped, will be found instructive to such readers as are not already familiar with the bearings of the questions in issue.

Especial attention is invited to the very able article of Count D'Alviella on "The Religious Value of the Unknowable," which is a review of the Harrison-Spencer discussion, and has been translated in full for present publication. The notes added to articles in this edition are distinguished from those of the authors by being inclosed in brackets. The brief synopsis of the "Synthetic Philosophy," made some time ago by Mr. Spencer, and referred to by Mr. Harrison, has been much inquired for, and, as it is not conveniently accessible, it has been reprinted in the Appendix.

E. L. Y.

NEW YORK, *February, 1885.*

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# INTRODUCTION.

THE eminent contestants in the following controversy occupy such different grounds that a few explanatory words regarding their positions and views may be helpful to some who will look over this volume.

In the beginning of last year Mr. Herbert Spencer published an article under the title of "Religion: A Retrospect and Prospect," which was a chapter from that division of his "Principles of Sociology" which treats of the evolution of "Ecclesiastical Institutions." In this article he reviewed in a narrow compass and a condensed statement the past tendencies of religious ideas, determined in what religious progress essentially consists, and on the basis of these results drew conclusions as to the direction and extent of further changes to be expected in the future. The position taken was a reaffirmation of views arrived at long previously. In the preliminary part of his "Synthetic Philosophy," begun in 1860, and upon which he has been ever since engaged, Mr. Spencer opened an inquiry into the boundaries of the sphere of valid knowledge as determined by the nature and necessary limitations of intelligence. This led him to the important question of the relations of Science and Religion. That the dividing line between these subjects has hitherto been a movable one, and that science in its progress has, from the first, encroached upon the recognized domain of religion, is not open to doubt. The

questions began to be asked with anxiety, How far is this process to go? and Is religion to disappear as the final result? Mr. Spencer answers, it is to be one of the functions of science in the future, as it has been in the past, to dissipate the errors that have become associated with religion; but when this is done its destructive work will cease. Very much, he maintains, must be carried away which is still believed to be an essential part of religion, but there will yet remain a great truth lying at the foundation of all religious systems, which science can not disturb, and which will permanently continue when all the mistaken beliefs accompanying it are swept away. Religion has its independent basis in a reality at the root of all the diverse, discordant, and changing faiths professed by mankind. What is this fundamental verity of religion which science can never destroy?

Mr. Spencer again answers that religion belongs to the sphere of the feelings—is grounded in the emotional nature of man. It does not consist in the body of intellectual dogmas out of which religious systems are constructed; but it essentially consists in the feelings that are awakened in mankind toward that Inscrutable Power variously and imperfectly conceived as the Infinite Being, the Spirit of the Universe, the Source of All Things. To grasp, to analyze, to formulate the nature of this Mysterious Power transcends the reach of intellect which is limited to the understanding of the relative and the finite; but the consciousness of it as an immanent reality, though vague and undefined, Mr. Spencer maintains to be indestructible in the psychical nature of man. In his "First Principles," where alone the argument can be found in full, Mr. Spencer reasons with marked originality, and, as we think, with convincing force, that criticism fails to reduce this conception to a negation; while

rigorous analysis confirms the positive existence of that Ultimate Reality behind all appearances which is the supreme object of religious feeling. This Mysterious Reality answers to the conception of Deity as embodied in the most advanced religious systems; but, preferring to use a term connotive of the inexorable limitations of thought, and a becoming humility, Mr. Spencer calls it the *Unknowable*, signifying thereby, not the unknown or a negation, but a positive Transcendent Existence, analogous to what is suggested by the terms the Infinite, the Inscrutable, the Unsearchable.

Mr. Frederic Harrison, well known as the ablest English representative of the Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte, attacked this view of Spencer in an article entitled "A Ghost of Religion," and continued the criticism in his subsequent article, "Agnostic Metaphysics." He maintained that Mr. Spencer had made a deadly assault upon everything hitherto known as religion, and applauded him for the thoroughness of his destructive work. He argued that the attempt to find anything like a common and truthful element in religious systems is futile: theological errors cleared away, nothing remains. The doctrine of the Unknowable is but a vain attempt to deify an All-Nothingness. The Unknowable is a barren abstraction, with nothing religious about it, and therefore wholly worthless as a basis of religion.

This is the main issue of the following controversy, and it involves the questions whether all past religions have been illusive to the core, and whether there is to be in future any lasting recognition of truth in the religious sphere of human experience. It will be observed that in the issue, as thus made up, Mr. Spencer appears on the religious side, while Mr. Harrison stands as its relentless antagonist. He says that he warned Mr. Spencer ten

years ago that "his religious doctrine of the Unknowable would lead him into strange company." The apprehended danger was, that the ground taken by Spencer might at length find favor with religious people; and now he intimates that this disaster, against which he raised his voice of warning, has actually occurred—that is, there are evidences that religious men are coming into agreement with Spencer's views. We indulged in a similar prophecy more than twenty years ago, though in no spirit of dread or warning. We said that, as science presses on with its inexorable work of criticism, undermining religious systems, and overthrowing theological errors, the stern question will increase in urgency, whether anything whatever of religious worth is to be left for man; and that there will then be a far higher appreciation of the position taken by Spencer that the essentials of religion are indestructible in human nature. Within the period referred to there have been manifest and marked changes in the direction indicated. But Mr. Spencer has not changed; he put forth his views and has kept almost silent about them until now. Yet he was at first denounced unsparingly as a materialist, an atheist, and a destroyer of religion. But, as his views are better understood, it is more and more recognized that he is working on the side of religion, and is doing it an invaluable service; while those who insist that all religious systems are baseless and false, and who first applauded him as a powerful ally, now repudiate him as a dangerous enemy.

Mr. Harrison argues, with much iteration and rhetorical emphasis, that Mr. Spencer's doctrine of the Unknowable can never be appreciated by common people. But it is unwise to dogmatize upon this point, for no fact in the history of man's religious development is more signifi-

cant than that progressive capacity of appreciation, by which views that could not be received by one age are accepted and assimilated by subsequent generations. And pre-eminently in these questioning times is it unsafe to set limits to the possibility of arriving at higher views upon this subject; as is sufficiently implied by Mr. Harrison's prediction of ten years, ago which he recognizes as being already fulfilled by the increasing favor with which religious people are inclined to regard the doctrine of the Unknowable.

The vital question here is, however, not whether Spencer's doctrine can become popular, but whether or not it is true; and, if true, what is its value as a basis of religion? As to the first point, Mr. Harrison makes argument unnecessary by explicitly conceding that there is truth in it. He says, "As a philosophical theory I accept his idea of the Unknowable." But he insists that it belongs to philosophy, is a mere logical formula, and has nothing to do with religion. Will he, then, contend that the process of philosophizing abolishes the classifications of the truths reached by it? Does the doctrine of heredity belong to philosophy, and have nothing to do with biology, because it is established in philosophical ways? Is the belief in God ruled out of the religious sphere when reached by logical reasoning? The doctrine of the Unknowable is religious, if it belongs to the order of religious conceptions. That which Mr. Harrison admits as true, Mr. Spencer has proved to be the underlying truth of all the religions that have existed and had power over mankind. Having admitted that the doctrine of the Unknowable is true, Mr. Harrison can consistently deny its religious character only by denying that there is anything religious about that which the whole world agrees in regarding as religious; and at this he does not hesitate.

Mr. Harrison again reasons that the doctrine of the Unknowable is worthless as a religious basis because it offers no intelligible object to move the religious feelings. What we do not and can not *know*, he argues, is as if it had no existence; the Unknowable must, therefore, be without religious power over human nature.

But the idea that the intellect must lead and the emotions follow in the religious sphere neither conforms to actual experience nor to the reason of the case. The religions of the world have certainly exerted a vast influence, and that influence has not been dependent upon the understanding of the nature of the supreme object of religious adoration. The element of power in the divine nature is that which lies beyond the grasp of intellect—the mysterious, the transcendent, the unknown. The terms in which the Supreme Being is habitually addressed by devout worshipers—the Inscrutable, the Unsearchable, the Infinite—sufficiently imply that the real object of reverence is beyond the reach of finite intelligence. Theologians, of course, dispute about the unity and the trinity of the Godhead, and dogmatize over the divine attributes; but under criticism they fall back upon the mystery which baffles reason; while many orthodox divines of eminent authority might be quoted who have declared that God is inconceivable by the intellect of man. But if the nature of the Deity is "past finding out," and if, as has been pointedly said, "A God understood would be no God at all," then surely it is that which "passes all understanding" that is the real object of reverential emotion. It is, therefore, in fact, the Unknowable, however obscured by explanatory assumptions, that has been the actual source of power over mankind in all religious systems.

And what experience here teaches, reason and science

confirm. The feelings which enter into religion, as into superstition, that are drawn out by the inexplicable, are extinguished by explanations. Intelligence brings a light, the case is understood, and the mystery that kindled fear and awe vanishes. This is the chief meaning of the historic antagonism between religion and science. If science could explain *everything*, there would be no province for the emotions awakened by the hidden and the inscrutable. But, so far from explaining all things, each explication of science is encompassed by insoluble enigmas, so that in all directions we come upon an ever-enlarging sphere of impenetrable mystery. Science, then, can not impair, but strengthens that element of religion which has ever been most potent in moving the devotional sentiments of mankind.

The power and permanence of religion must consist in the power and permanence of the emotions which constitute it. When it is said that religion is perennial in human nature, it is simply meant that what has produced it must continue to produce it. Different experiences generate their appropriate feelings; and there is one aspect of man's relation to the universe which originates the feelings that are concerned with religion. It is the impressiveness of its sublimities and the inexorableness of its omnipresent order. The grandeurs of the starry heavens, their bewildering immensities, their subtile interchanges of energy, the perplexing marvels of the human organism, the march of irresistible change in everything around—in short, the all-pervading and irresolvable mysteries of the world provoke questionings that can neither be satisfied nor repressed, and excite in the mind enduring emotions of wonder, admiration, humility, and trust. Nor are there wanting influences fitted to awaken the seriousness of feeling which gives

to religion its sanctity and its sacredness. The solemn realities of existence, the course of inexplicable destiny, the mystery of man's emergence into being, and his dread transit into the dark unknown, give origin to those sentiments of awe, fear, helpless dependence, and devotional reverence which have created religion, and must maintain as long as human nature lasts.

Mr. Harrison makes war on all current conceptions of religion, and especially on the doctrine of the Unknowable, not, as he claims, because he is an enemy of religion, but in the interest of a better one. He identifies religion with morality, duty, virtue, goodness, and, as these are human attributes, he holds that man is himself the intelligible object of veneration and adoration that religion demands. He accordingly accepts Comte's so-called religious scheme in which humanity is taken as the Supreme Being, and becomes the glorified object of a formal worship. The idea has, as yet, extended slowly, but it has been reduced to working shape, and has given origin to an organized sect with its formularies and rituals.* Of the merits of Mr. Harrison's alternative it is not necessary here to speak, as they are considered by both parties in the following discussion. But all we have said of his antagonism to religion is here sufficiently justified. For to substitute Man for God as an object of religious adoration involves a revolution in the relations of things, and a total inversion in the meanings of terms that puts an end to the idea of religion. Mr. Harrison's fantastic and ridiculous cult is not a religion, and he should give the new and profoundly different thing a new name.

* See Appendix, "A Positivist Religious Service."

# RELIGION:
# A RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT.

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By HERBERT SPENCER.

# RELIGION:
# A RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT.*

UNLIKE the ordinary consciousness, the religious consciousness is concerned with that which lies beyond the sphere of sense. A brute thinks only of things which can be touched, seen, heard, tasted, etc.; and the like is true of the untaught child, the deaf-mute, and the lowest savage. But the developing man has thoughts about existences which he regards as usually intangible, inaudible, invisible; and yet which he regards as operative upon him. What suggests this notion of agencies transcending perception? How do these ideas concerning the supernatural evolve out of ideas concerning the natural? The transition cannot be sudden; and an account of the genesis of religion must begin by describing the steps through which the transition takes place.

The ghost-theory exhibits these steps quite clearly. We are shown by it that the mental differentiation of invisible and intangible beings from visible and tangible beings progresses slowly and unobtrusively. In the fact that the other-self, supposed to wander in dreams, is believed to have actually done and seen whatever was dreamed—in the fact that the other-self when going away

* The statements concerning matters of fact in the first part of this article are based on the contents of Part I. of "The Principles of Sociology."

at death, but expected presently to return, is conceived as a double equally material with the original; we see that the supernatural agent in its primitive form diverges very little from the natural agent—is simply the original man with some added powers of going about secretly and doing good or evil. And the fact that when the double of the dead man ceases to be dreamed about by those who knew him, his non-appearance in dreams is held to imply that he is finally dead, shows that these earliest supernatural agents are conceived as having but a temporary existence: the first tendencies to a permanent consciousness of the supernatural prove abortive.

In many cases no higher degree of differentiation is reached. The ghost-population, recruited by deaths on the one side, but on the other side losing its members as they cease to be recollected and dreamed about, does not increase; and no individuals included in it come to be recognised through successive generations as established supernatural powers. Thus the Unkulunkulu, or old-old one, of the Zulus, the father of the race, is regarded as finally or completely dead; and there is propitiation only of ghosts of more recent date. But where circumstances favour the continuance of sacrifices at graves, witnessed by members of each new generation, who are told about the dead and transmit the tradition, there eventually arises the conception of a permanently-existing ghost or spirit. A more marked contrast in thought between supernatural beings and natural beings is thus established. There simultaneously results a great increase in the number of these supposed supernatural beings, since the aggregate of them is now continually added to; and there is a strengthening tendency to think of them as everywhere around, and as causing all unusual occurrences.

Differences among the ascribed powers of ghosts soon arise. They naturally follow from observed differences among the powers of living individuals. Hence it results that while the propitiations of ordinary ghosts are made only by their descendants, it comes occasionally to be thought prudent to propitiate also the ghosts of the more dreaded individuals, even though they have no claims of blood. Quite early there thus begin those grades of supernatural beings which eventually become so strongly marked.

Habitual wars, which more than all other causes initiate these first differentiations, go on to initiate further and more decided ones. For with those compoundings of small societies into greater ones, and re-compounding of these into still greater, which war effects, there, of course, with the multiplying gradations of power among living men, arises the conception of multiplying gradations of power among their ghosts. Thus in course of time are formed the conceptions of the great ghosts or gods, the more numerous secondary ghosts or demi-gods, and so on downward—a pantheon: there being still, however, no essential distinction of kind; as we see in the calling of ordinary ghosts *manes*-gods by the Romans and *elohim* by the Hebrews. Moreover, repeating as the other life in the other world does the life in this world, in its needs, occupations, and social organisation, there arises not only a differentiation of grades among supernatural beings in respect of their powers, but also in respect of their characters and kinds of activity. There come to be local gods, and gods reigning over this or that order of phenomena; there come to be good and evil spirits of various qualities; and where there has been by conquest a superposing of societies one upon another, each having its own system of ghost-derived beliefs, there

results an involved combination of such beliefs, constituting a mythology.

Of course ghosts primarily being doubles like the originals in all things; and gods (when not the living members of a conquering race) being doubles of the more powerful men; it results that they, too, are originally no less human than other ghosts in their physical characters, their passions, and their intelligences. Like the doubles of the ordinary dead, they are supposed to consume the flesh, blood, bread, wine, given to them: at first literally, and later in a more spiritual way by consuming the essences of them. They not only appear as visible and tangible persons, but they enter into conflicts with men, are wounded, suffer pain: the sole distinction being that they have miraculous powers of healing and consequent immortality. Here, indeed, there needs a qualification; for not only do various peoples hold that the gods die a first death (as naturally happens where they are members of a conquering race, called gods because of their superiority), but, as in the case of Pan, it is supposed, even among the cultured, that there is a second and final death of a god, like that second and final death of a man supposed among existing savages. With advancing civilisation the divergence of the supernatural being from the natural being becomes more decided. There is nothing to check the gradual de-materialisation of the ghost and of the god; and this de-materialisation is insensibly furthered in the effort to reach consistent ideas of supernatural action: the god ceases to be tangible, and later he ceases to be visible or audible. Along with this differentiation of physical attributes from those of humanity, there goes on more slowly the differentiation of mental attributes. The god of the savage, represented as having intelligence scarcely, if at all, greater than that of the

living man, is deluded with ease. Even the gods of the semi-civilised are deceived, make mistakes, repent of their plans; and only in course of time does there arise the conception of unlimited vision and universal knowledge. The emotional nature simultaneously undergoes a parallel transformation. The grosser passions, originally conspicuous and carefully ministered to by devotees, gradually fade, leaving only the passions less related to corporeal satisfactions; and eventually these, too, become partially de-humanised.

These ascribed characters of deities are continually adapted and re-adapted to the needs of the social state. During the militant phase of activity, the chief god is conceived as holding insubordination the greatest crime, as implacable in anger, as merciless in punishment; and any alleged attributes of a milder kind occupy but small space in the social consciousness. But where militancy declines and the harsh, despotic form of government appropriate to it is gradually qualified by the form appropriate to industrialism, the foreground of the religious consciousness is increasingly filled with those ascribed traits of the divine nature which are congruous with the ethics of peace: divine love, divine forgiveness, divine mercy, are now the characteristics enlarged upon.

To perceive clearly the effects of mental progress and changing social life thus stated in the abstract, we must glance at them in the concrete. If, without foregone conclusions, we contemplate the traditions, records, and monuments of the Egyptians, we see that out of their primitive ideas of gods, brute or human, there were evolved spiritualised ideas of gods, and finally of a god; until the priesthoods of later times, repudiating the earlier ideas, described them as corruptions: being swayed by the universal tendency to regard the first state as the

highest—a tendency traceable down to the theories of existing theologians and mythologists. Again, if, putting aside speculations, and not asking what historical value the "Iliad" may have, we take it simply as indicating the early Greek notion of Zeus, and compare this with the notion contained in the Platonic dialogues; we see that Greek civilisation had greatly modified (in the better minds at least) the purely anthropomorphic conception of him: the lower human attributes being dropped and the higher ones transfigured. Similarly, if we contrast the Hebrew God described in primitive traditions, manlike in appearance, appetites, and emotions, with the Hebrew God as characterised by the prophets, there is shown a widening range of power along with a nature increasingly remote from that of man. And on passing to the conceptions of him which are now entertained, we are made aware of an extreme transfiguration. By a convenient obliviousness, a deity who in early times is represented as hardening men's hearts so that they may commit punishable acts, and as employing a lying spirit to deceive them, comes to be mostly thought of as an embodiment of virtues transcending the highest we can imagine.

Thus, recognising the fact that in the primitive human mind there exists neither religious idea nor religious sentiment, we find that in the course of social evolution and the evolution of intelligence accompanying it, there are generated both the ideas and sentiments which we distinguish as religious; and that through a process of causation clearly traceable, they traverse those stages which have brought them, among civilised races, to their present forms.

And now what may we infer will be the evolu-

tion of religious ideas and sentiments throughout the future? On the one hand it is irrational to suppose that the changes which have brought the religious consciousness to its present form will suddenly cease. On the other hand, it is irrational to suppose that the religious consciousness, naturally generated as we have seen, will disappear and leave an unfilled gap. Manifestly it must undergo further changes; and however much changed it must continue to exist. What then are the transformations to be expected? If we reduce the process above delineated to its lowest terms, we shall see our way to an answer.

As pointed out in "First Principles," § 96, Evolution is throughout its course habitually modified by that Dissolution which eventually undoes it: the changes which become manifest being usually but the differential results of opposing tendencies towards integration and disintegration. Rightly to understand the genesis and decay of religious systems, and the probable future of those now existing, we must take this truth into account. During those earlier changes by which there is created a hierarchy of gods, demi-gods, manes-gods, and spirits of various kinds and ranks, evolution goes on with but little qualification. The consolidated mythology produced, while growing in the mass of supernatural beings composing it, assumes increased heterogeneity along with increased definiteness in the arrangement of its parts and the attributes of its members. But the antagonist Dissolution eventually gains predominance. The spreading recognition of natural causation conflicts with this mythological evolution, and insensibly weakens those of its beliefs which are most at variance with advancing knowledge. Demons and the secondary divinities presiding over divisions of Nature, become less thought of as the

phenomena ascribed to them are more commonly observed to follow a constant order; and hence these minor components of the mythology slowly dissolve away. At the same time, with growing supremacy of the great god heading the hierarchy, there goes increasing ascription to him of actions which were before distributed among numerous supernatural beings: there is integration of power. While in proportion as there arises the consequent conception of an omnipotent and omnipresent deity, there is a gradual fading of his alleged human attributes: dissolution begins to affect the supreme personality in respect of ascribed form and nature.

Already, as we have seen, this process has in the more advanced societies, and especially among their higher members, gone to the extent of merging all minor supernatural powers in one supernatural power; and already this one supernatural power has, by what Mr. Fiske aptly calls de-anthropomorphisation, lost the grosser attributes of humanity. If things hereafter are to follow the same general course as heretofore, we must infer that this dropping of human attributes will continue. Let us ask what positive changes are hence to be expected.

Two factors must unite in producing them. There is the development of those higher sentiments which no longer tolerate the ascription of inferior sentiments to a divinity; and there is the intellectual development which causes dissatisfaction with the crude interpretations previously accepted. Of course in pointing out the effects of these factors, I must name some which are familiar; but it is needful to glance at them along with others.

The cruelty of a Fijian god who, represented as devouring the souls of the dead, may be supposed to inflict torture during the process, is small compared with

the cruelty of a god who condemns men to tortures which are eternal; and the ascription of this cruelty, though habitual in ecclesiastical formulas, occasionally occurring in sermons, and still sometimes pictorially illustrated, is becoming so intolerable to the better-natured, that while some theologians distinctly deny it, others quietly drop it out of their teachings. Clearly, this change cannot cease until the beliefs in hell and damnation disappear.*
Disappearance of them will be aided by an increasing repugnance to injustice. The visiting on Adam's descendants through hundreds of generations dreadful penalties for a small transgression which they did not commit; the damning of all men who do not avail themselves of an alleged mode of obtaining forgiveness, which most men have never heard of; and the effecting a reconciliation by sacrificing a son who was perfectly innocent, to satisfy the assumed necessity for a propitiatory victim; are modes of action which, ascribed to a human ruler, would call forth expressions of abhorrence; and the ascription of them to the Ultimate Cause of things, even now felt to be full of difficulties, must become impossible.

So, too, must die out the belief that a Power present in innumerable worlds throughout infinite space, and who during millions of years of the Earth's earlier existence needed no honouring by its inhabitants, should be seized with a craving for praise; and having created mankind, should be angry with them if they do not perpetually tell him how great he is. As fast as men escape from that glamour of early impressions which prevents

* To meet a possible criticism, it may be well to remark that whatever force they may have against deists (and they have very little), Butler's arguments concerning these and allied beliefs do not tell at all against agnostics.

them from thinking, they will refuse to imply a trait of character which is the reverse of worshipful.

Similarly with the logical incongruities more and more conspicuous to growing intelligence. Passing over the familiar difficulties that sundry of the implied divine traits are in contradiction with the divine attributes otherwise ascribed—that a god who repents of what he has done must be lacking either in power or in foresight; that his anger presupposes an occurrence which has been contrary to intention, and so indicates defect of means; we come to the deeper difficulty that such emotions, in common with all emotions, can exist only in a consciousness which is limited. Every emotion has its antecedent ideas, and antecedent ideas are habitually supposed to occur in God: he is represented as seeing and hearing this or the other, and as being emotionally affected thereby. That is to say, the conception of a divinity possessing these traits of character, necessarily continues anthropomorphic; not only in the sense that the emotions ascribed are like those of human beings, but also in the sense that they form parts of a consciousness which, like the human consciousness, is formed of successive states. And such a conception of the divine consciousness is irreconcilable both with the unchangeableness otherwise alleged, and with the omniscience otherwise alleged. For a consciousness constituted of ideas and feelings caused by objects and occurrences, cannot be simultaneously occupied with all objects and all occurrences throughout the universe. To believe in a divine consciousness, men must refrain from thinking what is meant by consciousness—must stop short with verbal propositions; and propositions which they are debarred from rendering into thoughts will more and more fail to satisfy them. Of course like difficulties present themselves when the will of God is spoken of.

So long as we refrain from giving a definite meaning to the word will, we may say that it is possessed by the Cause of All Things, as readily as we may say that love of approbation is possessed by a circle; but when from the words we pass to the thoughts they stand for, we find that we can no more unite in consciousness the terms of the one proposition than we can those of the other. Whoever conceives any other will than his own must do so in terms of his own will, which is the sole will directly known to him—all other wills being only inferred. But will, as each is conscious of it, presupposes a motive—a prompting desire of some kind: absolute indifference excludes the conception of will. Moreover will, as implying a prompting desire, connotes some end contemplated as one to be achieved, and ceases with the achievement of it: some other will, referring to some other end, taking its place. That is to say, will, like emotion, necessarily supposes a series of states of consciousness. The conception of a divine will, derived from that of the human will, involves, like it, localization in space and time: the willing of each end, excluding from consciousness for an interval the willing of other ends, and therefore being inconsistent with that omnipresent activity which simultaneously works out an infinity of ends. It is the same with the ascription of intelligence. Not to dwell on the seriality and limitation implied as before, we may note that intelligence, as alone conceivable by us, presupposes existences independent of it and objective to it. It is carried on in terms of changes primarily wrought by alien activities—the impressions generated by things beyond consciousness, and the ideas derived from such impressions. To speak of an intelligence which exists in the absence of all such alien activities, is to use a meaningless word. If to the corollary that the First Cause,

considered as intelligent, must be continually affected by independent objective activities, it is replied that these have become such by act of creation, and were previously included in the First Cause; then the reply is that in such case the First Cause could, before this creation, have had nothing to generate in it such changes as those constituting what we call intelligence, and must therefore have been unintelligent at the time when intelligence was most called for. Hence it is clear that the intelligence ascribed, answers in no respect to that which we know by the name. It is intelligence out of which all the characters constituting it have vanished.

These and other difficulties, some of which are often discussed but never disposed of, must force men hereafter to drop the higher anthropomorphic characters given to the First Cause, as they have long since dropped the lower. The conception which has been enlarging from the beginning must go on enlarging, until, by disappearance of its limits, it becomes a consciousness which transcends the forms of distinct thought, though it for ever remains a consciousness.

"But how can such a final consciousness of the Unknowable, thus tacitly alleged to be true, be reached by successive modifications of a conception which was utterly untrue? The ghost-theory of the savage is baseless. The material double of a dead man in which he believes, never had any existence. And if by gradual dematerialisation of this double was produced the conception of the supernatural agent in general—if the conception of a deity, formed by the dropping of some human attributes and transfiguration of others, resulted from continuance of this process; is not the developed and purified conception reached by pushing the process to its

limit, a fiction also? Surely if the primitive belief was absolutely false, all derived beliefs must be absolutely false."

This objection looks fatal; and it would be fatal were its premiss valid. Unexpected as it will be to most readers, the answer here to be made is that at the outset a germ of truth was contained in the primitive conception —the truth, namely, that the power which manifests itself in consciousness is but a differently-conditioned form of the power which manifests itself beyond consciousness.

Every voluntary act yields to the primitive man proof of a source of energy within him. Not that he thinks about his internal experiences; but in these experiences this notion lies latent. When producing motion in his limbs, and through them motion in other things, he is aware of the accompanying feeling of effort. And this sense of effort which is the perceived antecedent of changes produced by him, becomes the conceived antecedent of changes not produced by him—furnishes him with a term of thought by which to represent the genesis of these objective changes. At first this idea of muscular force as anteceding unusual events around him, carries with it the whole assemblage of associated ideas. He thinks of the implied effort as an effort exercised by a being just like himself. In course of time these doubles of the dead, supposed to be workers of all but the most familiar changes, are modified in conception. Besides becoming less grossly material, some of them are developed into larger personalities presiding over classes of phenomena which being comparatively regular in their order, suggest a belief in beings who, while more powerful than men, are less variable in their modes of action. So that the idea of force as exercised by such beings comes to be less

associated with the idea of a human ghost. Further advances, by which minor supernatural agents are merged in one general agent, and by which the personality of this general agent is rendered vague while becoming widely extended, tend still further to dissociate the notion of objective force from the force known as such in consciousness; and the dissociation reaches its extreme in the thoughts of the man of science, who interprets in terms of force not only the visible changes of sensible bodies, but all physical changes whatever, even up to the undulations of the ethereal medium. Nevertheless, this force (be it force under that statical form by which matter resists, or under that dynamical form distinguished as energy) is to the last thought of in terms of that internal energy which he is conscious of as muscular effort. He is compelled to symbolise objective force in terms of subjective force from lack of any other symbol.

See now the implications. That internal energy which in the experiences of the primitive man was always the immediate antecedent of changes wrought by him—that energy which, when interpreting external changes, he thought of along with those attributes of a human personality connected with it in himself; is the same energy which, freed from anthropomorphic accompaniments, is now figured as the cause of all external phenomena. The last stage reached is recognition of the truth that force as it exists beyond consciousness, cannot be like what we know as force within consciousness; and that yet, as either is capable of generating the other, they must be different modes of the same. Consequently, the final outcome of that speculation commenced by the primitive man, is that the Power manifested throughout the Universe distinguished as material, is the same power which in ourselves wells up under the form of consciousness.

It is untrue, then, that the foregoing argument proposes to evolve a true belief from a belief which was wholly false. Contrariwise, the ultimate form of the religious consciousness is the final development of a consciousness which at the outset contained a germ of truth obscured by multitudinous errors.

Those who think that science is dissipating religious beliefs and sentiments, seem unaware that whatever of mystery is taken from the old interpretation is added to the new. Or rather, we may say that transference from the one to the other is accompanied by increase; since, for an explanation which has a seeming feasibility, science substitutes an explanation which, carrying us back only a certain distance, there leaves us in presence of the avowedly inexplicable.

Under one of its aspects scientific progress is a gradual transfiguration of Nature. Where ordinary perception saw perfect simplicity it reveals great complexity; where there seemed absolute inertness it discloses intense activity; and in what appears mere vacancy it finds a marvellous play of forces. Each generation of physicists discovers in so-called "brute matter" powers which, but a few years before, the most instructed physicists would have thought incredible; as instance the ability of a mere iron plate to take up the complicated aërial vibrations produced by articulate speech, which, translated into multitudinous and varied electric pulses, are retranslated a thousand miles off by another iron plate and again heard as articulate speech. When the explorer of Nature sees that, quiescent as they appear, surrounding solid bodies are thus sensitive to forces which are infinitesimal in their amounts—when the spectroscope proves to him that molecules on the Earth pulsate in harmony with

molecules in the stars—when there is forced on him the inference that every point in space thrills with an infinity of vibrations passing through it in all directions; the conception to which he tends is much less that of a Universe of dead matter than that of a Universe everywhere alive: alive if not in the restricted sense, still in a general sense.

This transfiguration, which the inquiries of physicists continually increase, is aided by that other transfiguration resulting from metaphysical inquiries. Subjective analysis compels us to admit that our scientific interpretations of the phenomena which objects present are expressed in terms of our own variously-combined sensations and ideas —are expressed, that is, in elements belonging to consciousness, which are but symbols of the something beyond consciousness. Though analysis afterwards reinstates our primitive beliefs, to the extent of showing that behind every group of phenomenal manifestations there is always a *nexus*, which is the reality that remains fixed amid appearances which are variable, yet we are shown that this *nexus* of reality is for ever inaccessible to consciousness. And when, once more, we remember that the activities constituting consciousness, being rigorously bounded, cannot bring in among themselves the activities beyond the bounds, which therefore seem unconscious, though production of either by the other seems to imply that they are of the same essential nature, this necessity we are under to think of the external energy in terms of the internal energy gives rather a spiritualistic than a materialistic aspect to the Universe: further thought, however, obliging us to recognise the truth that a conception given in phenomenal manifestations of this ultimate energy can in no wise show us what it is.

While the beliefs to which analytic science thus leads are such as do not destroy the object-matter of religion,

but simply transfigure it, science under its concrete forms enlarges the sphere for religious sentiment. From the very beginning the progress of knowledge has been accompanied by an increasing capacity for wonder. Among savages, the lowest are the least surprised when shown remarkable products of civilised art: astonishing the traveller by their indifference. And so little of the marvellous do they perceive in the grandest phenomena of Nature, that any inquiries concerning them they regard as childish trifling. This contrast in mental attitude between the lowest human beings and the higher human beings around us, is paralleled by the contrasts among the grades of these higher human beings themselves. It is not the rustic, nor the artisan, nor the trader, who sees something more than a mere matter of course in the hatching of a chick; but it is the biologist, who, pushing to the uttermost his analysis of vital phenomena, reaches his greatest perplexity when a speck of protoplasm under the microscope shows him life in its simplest form, and makes him feel that however he formulates its processes the actual play of forces remains unimaginable. Neither in the ordinary tourist nor in the deer-stalker climbing the mountains above him, does a highland glen rouse ideas beyond those of sport or of the picturesque; but it may, and often does, in the geologist. He, observing that the glacier-rounded rock he sits on has lost by weathering but half-an-inch of its surface since a time far more remote than the beginnings of human civilisation, and then trying to conceive the slow denudation which has cut out the whole valley, has thoughts of time and of power to which they are strangers—thoughts which, already utterly inadequate to their objects, he feels to be still more futile on noting the contorted beds of gneiss around, which tell him of a time, immeasurably more remote, when far be-

neath the Earth's surface they were in a half-melted state, and again tell him of a time, immensely exceeding this in remoteness, when their components were sand and mud on the shores of an ancient sea. Nor is it in the primitive peoples who supposed that the heavens rested on the mountain tops, any more than in the modern inheritors of their cosmogony who repeat that "the heavens declare the glory of God," that we find the largest conceptions of the Universe or the greatest amount of wonder excited by contemplation of it. Rather, it is in the astronomer, who sees in the Sun a mass so vast that even into one of his spots our Earth might be plunged without touching its edges; and who by every finer telescope is shown an increased multitude of such suns, many of them far larger.

Hereafter, as heretofore, higher faculty and deeper insight will raise rather than lower this sentiment. At present the most powerful and most instructed mind has neither the knowledge nor the capacity required for symbolising in thought the totality of things. Occupied with one or other division of Nature, the man of science usually does not know enough of the other divisions even rudely to conceive the extent and complexity of their phenomena; and supposing him to have adequate knowledge of each, yet he is unable to think of them as a whole. Wider and stronger intellect may hereafter help him to form a vague consciousness of them in their totality. We may say that just as an undeveloped musical faculty, able only to appreciate a simple melody, cannot grasp the variously-entangled passages and harmonies of a symphony, which in the minds of composer and conductor are unified into involved musical effects awakening far greater feeling than is possible to the musically uncultured; so, by future more evolved intelligences, the course of things

now apprehensible only in parts may be apprehensible all together, with an accompanying feeling as much beyond that of the present cultured man, as his feeling is beyond that of the savage.

And this feeling is not likely to be decreased but to be increased by that analysis of knowledge which, while forcing him to agnosticism, yet continually prompts him to imagine some solution of the Great Enigma which he knows cannot be solved. Especially must this be so when he remembers that the very notions, beginning and end, cause and purpose, are relative notions belonging to human thought which are probably irrelevant to the Ultimate Reality transcending human thought; and when, though suspecting that explanation is a word without meaning when applied to this Ultimate Reality, he yet feels compelled to think there must be an explanation.

But amid the mysteries which become the more mysterious the more they are thought about, there will remain the one absolute certainty, that he is ever in presence of an Infinite and Eternal Energy, from which all things proceed.

# THE GHOST OF RELIGION.

By FREDERIC HARRISON.

# THE GHOST OF RELIGION.

In the January number of this Review is to be found an article on Religion which has justly awakened a profound and sustained interest. The creed of Agnosticism was there formulated anew by the acknowledged head of the Evolution philosophy, with a definiteness such as perhaps it never wore before. To my mind there is nothing in the whole range of modern religious discussion more cogent and more suggestive than the array of conclusions the final outcome of which is marshalled in those twelve pages. It is the last word of the Agnostic philosophy in its long controversy with Theology. That word is decisive, and it is hard to conceive how Theology can rally for another bout from such a *sorites* of dilemma as is there presented. My own humble purpose is not to criticise this paper, but to point its practical moral, and, if I may, to add to it a rider of my own. As a summary of philosophical conclusions on the theological problem, it seems to me frankly unanswerable. Speaking generally, I shall now dispute no part of it but one word, and that is the title. It is entitled "Religion." To me it is rather the Ghost of Religion. Religion as a living force lies in a different sphere.

The essay, which is packed with thought to a degree unusual even with Mr. Herbert Spencer, contains evidently three parts. The first (pp. 17–24) deals with the

historical Evolution of Religion, of which Mr. Spencer traces the germs in the primitive belief in ghosts. The second (pp. 24–28) arrays the moral and intellectual dilemmas involved in all anthropomorphic theology into one long catena of difficulty, out of which it is hard to conceive any free mind emerging with success. The third part (pp. 28–35) deals with the evolution of religion in the future, and formulates, more precisely than has ever yet been effected, the positive creed of Agnostic philosophy.

Has, then, the Agnostic a positive creed? It would seem so; for Mr. Spencer brings us at last "to the one absolute certainty, the presence of an Infinite and Eternal Energy, from which all things proceed." But let no one suppose that this is merely a new name for the Great First Cause of so many theologies and metaphysics. In spite of the capital letters, and the use of theological terms as old as Isaiah or Athanasius, Mr. Spencer's Energy has no analogy with God. It is Eternal, Infinite, and Incomprehensible; but still it is not He, but It. It remains always Energy, Force, nothing anthropomorphic; such as electricity, or anything else that we might conceive as the ultimate basis of all the physical forces. None of the positive attributes which have ever been predicated of God can be used of this Energy. Neither goodness, nor wisdom, nor justice, nor consciousness, nor will, nor life, can be ascribed, even by analogy, to this Force. Now a force to which we cannot apply the ideas of goodness, wisdom, justice, consciousness, or life, any more than we can to a circle, is certainly not God, has no analogy with God, nor even with what Pope has called the "Great First Cause, least understood." It shares some of the negative attributes of God and First Cause but no positive one. It is, in fact, only the Unknowable a little more defined; though I do not remember that

Mr. Spencer, or any Evolution philosopher, has ever formulated the Unknowable in terms with so deep a theological ring as we hear in the phrase "Infinite and Eternal Energy, from which all things proceed."

The terms do seem, perhaps, rather needlessly big and absolute. And fully accepting Mr. Spencer's logical canons, one does not see why it should be called an "absolute certainty." "Practical belief" satisfies me; and I doubt the legitimacy of substituting for it "absolute certainty." "Infinite" and "Eternal," also, can mean to Mr. Spencer nothing more than "to which we know no limits, no beginning or end," and for my part, I prefer to say this. Again, "an Energy"—why AN Energy? The Unknowable may certainly consist of more than one energy. To assert the presence of one uniform energy is to profess to know something very important about the Unknowable: that it is homogeneous, and even identical, throughout the Universe. And then, "from which all things proceed" is perhaps a rather equivocal reversion to the theologic type. In the Athanasian Creed the Third Person "proceeds" from the First and the Second. But this process has always been treated as a mystery; and it would be safer to avoid the phrases of mysticism. Let us keep the old words, for we all mean much the same thing; and I prefer to put it thus. All observation and meditation, Science and Philosophy, bring us "to the *practical belief* that man is ever in the presence of *some energy or energies*, of which he knows nothing, and to which therefore he would be wise to assign no limits, conditions, or functions." This is, doubtless, what Mr. Spencer himself means. For my part, I prefer his old term, the Unknowable. Though I have always thought that it would be more philosophical not to assert of the Unknown that it is Unknowable. And, indeed, I would

rather not use the capital letter, but stick literally to our evidence, and say frankly "the unknown."

Thus viewed, the attempt, so to speak, to put a little unction into the Unknowable is hardly worth the philosophical inaccuracy it involves; and such is the drawback to any use of picturesque language. So stated, the positive creed of Agnosticism still retains its negative character. It has a series of propositions and terms, every one of which is a negation. A friend of my own, who was much pressed to say how much of the Athanasian Creed he still accepted, once said that he clung to the idea "that there was a sort of a something." In homely words such as the unlearned can understand, that is precisely what the religion of the Agnostic comes to, "the belief that there is a sort of a something, about which we can know nothing."

Now let us profess that, as a philosophical answer to the theological problem, that is entirely our own position. The Positivist answer is of course the same as the Agnostic answer. Why, then, do we object to be called Agnostics? Simply because Agnostic is only dog-Greek for "don't know," and we have no taste to be called "don't knows." The "Spectator" calls us Agnostics, but that is only by way of prejudice. Our religion does not consist in a comprehensive negation; we are not for ever replying to the theological problem; we are quite unconcerned by the theological problem, and have something that we do care for, and do know. Englishmen are Europeans, and many of them are Christians, and they usually prefer to call themselves Englishmen, Christians, or the like, rather than non-Asiatics or anti-Mahometans. Some people still prefer to call themselves Protestants rather than Christians, but the taste is dying out, except amongst Irish Orangemen, and even the Nonconformist newspaper

has been induced by Mr. Matthew Arnold to drop its famous motto: "The dissidence of Dissent, and the Protestantism of the Protestant religion." For a man to say that his religion is Agnosticism is simply the sceptical equivalent of saying that his religion is Protestantism. Both mean that his religion is to deny and to differ. But this is not religion. The business of religion is to affirm and to unite, and nothing can be religion but that which at once affirms truth and unites men.

The purpose of the present paper is to show that Agnosticism, though a valid and final answer to the theological or ontological problem—"what is the ultimate cause of the world and of man?"—is not a religion nor the shadow of a religion. It offers none of the rudiments or elements of religion, and religion is not to be found in that line at all. It is the mere disembodied spirit of dead religion: as we said at the outset, it is the ghost of religion. Agnosticism, perfectly legitimate as the true answer of science to an effete question, has shown us that religion is not to be found anywhere within the realm of Cause. Having brought us to the answer, "no cause that we know of," it is laughable to call that negation religion. Mr. Mark Pattison, one of the acutest minds of modern Oxford, rather oddly says that the idea of deity has now been "defecated to a pure transparency." The evolution philosophy goes a step further and defecates the idea of cause to a pure transparency. Theology and ontology alike end in the Everlasting No with which science confronts all their assertions. But how whimsical is it to tell us that religion, which cannot find any resting-place in theology or ontology, is to find its true home in the Everlasting No! That which is defecated to a pure transparency can never supply a religion to any human being but a philosopher constructing a system. It is quite conceiv-

able that religion is to end with theology, and both might in the course of evolution become an anachronism. But if religion there is still to be, it cannot be found in this No-man's-land and Know-nothing creed. Better bury religion at once than let its ghost walk uneasy in our dreams.

The true lesson is that we must hark back, and leave the realm of cause. The accident of religion has been mistaken for the essence of religion. The essence of religion is not to answer a question, but to govern and unite men and societies by giving them common beliefs and duties. Theologies tried to do this, and long did it, by resting on certain answers to certain questions. The progress of thought has upset one answer after another, and now the final verdict of philosophy is that all the answers are unmeaning, and that no rational answer can be given. It follows then that questions and answers, both but the accident of religion, must both be given up. A base of belief and duty must be looked for elsewhere, and when this has been found, then again religion will succeed in governing and uniting men. Where is this base to be found? Since the realm of Cause has failed to give us foothold, we must fall back upon the realm of Law—social, moral, and mental law, and not merely physical. Religion consists, not in answering certain questions, but in making men of a certain quality. And the law, moral, mental, social, is pre-eminently the field wherein men may be governed and united. Hence to the religion of Cause there succeeds the religion of Law. But the religion of Law or Science is Positivism.

It is no part of my purpose to criticise Mr. Spencer's memorable essay, except so far as it is necessary to show that that which is a sound philosophical conclusion is not religion, simply by reason that it relates to the subject-

matter of theology. But a few words may be suffered as to the historical evolution of religion. To many persons it will sound rather whimsical, and possibly almost a sneer, to trace the germs of religion to the ghost-theory. Our friends of the Psychical Research will prick up their ears, and expect to be taken *au grand sérieux*. But the conception is a thoroughly solid one, and of most suggestive kind. Beyond all doubt, the hypothesis of quasi-human immaterial spirits working within and behind familiar phenomena did take its rise from the idea of the other self which the imagination continually presents to the early reflections of man. And, beyond all doubt, the phenomena of dreams, and the gradual construction of a theory of ghosts, is a very impressive and vivid form of the notion of the other self. It would, I think, be wrong to assert that it is the only form of the notion, and one can hardly suppose that Mr. Spencer would limit himself to that. But, in any case, the construction of a coherent theory of ghosts is a typical instance of a belief in a quasi-human spirit-world. Glorify and amplify this idea, and apply it to the whole of nature, and we get a god-world, a multitude of superhuman divine spirits.

That is the philosophical explanation of the rise of theology, of the peopling of Nature with divine spirits. But does it explain the rise of Religion? No, for theology and religion are not conterminous. Mr. Spencer has unwittingly conceded to the divines that which they assume so confidently—that theology is the same thing as religion, and that there was no religion at all until there was a belief in superhuman spirits within and behind Nature. This is obviously an oversight. We have to go very much further back for the genesis of religion. There were countless centuries of time, and there were, and there are, countless millions of men for whom no doc-

trine of superhuman spirits ever took coherent form. In all these ages and races, probably by far the most numerous that our planet has witnessed, there was religion in all kinds of definite form. Comte calls it Fetichism—terms are not important: roughly, we may call it Nature-worship. The religion in all these types was the belief and worship not of spirits of any kind, not of any immaterial, imagined being *inside* things, but of the actual visible things themselves—trees, stones, rivers, mountains, earth, fire, stars, sun, and sky. Some of the most abiding and powerful of all religions have consisted in elaborate worship of these physical objects treated frankly as physical objects, without trace of ghost, spirit, or god. To say nothing of fire-worship, river, and tree-worship, the venerable religion of China, far the most vast of all systematic religions, is wholly based on reverence for Earth, Sky, and ancestors treated objectively, and not as the abode of subjective immaterial spirits.

Hence the origin of religion is to be sought in the countless ages before the rise of theology; before spirits, ghosts, or gods ever took definite form in the human mind. The primitive uncultured man frankly worshipped external objects in love and in fear, ascribing to them quasi-human powers and feelings. All that we read about Animism, ghosts, spirits, and universal ideas of godhead in this truly primitive stage are metaphysical assumptions of men trying to read the ideas of later epochs into the facts of an earlier epoch. Nothing is more certain than that man everywhere started with a simple worship of natural objects. And the bearing of this on the future of religion is decisive. The religion of man in the vast cycles of primitive ages was reverence for Nature as influencing Man. The religion of man in the vast cycles that are to come will be the reverence for

Humanity as supported by Nature. The religion of man in the twenty or thirty centuries of Theology was reverence for the assumed authors or controllers of Nature. But, that assumption having broken up, religion does not break up with it. On the contrary, it enters on a far greater and more potent career, inasmuch as the natural emotions of the human heart are now combined with the certainty of scientific knowledge. The final religion of enlightened man is the systematised and scientific form of the spontaneous religion of natural man. Both rest on the same elements—belief in the Power which controls his life, and grateful reverence for the Power so acknowledged. The primitive man thought that Power to be the object of Nature affecting Man. The cultured man knows that Power to be Humanity itself, controlling and controlled by nature according to natural law. The transitional and perpetually changing creed of Theology has been an interlude. Agnosticism has uttered its epilogue. But Agnosticism is no more religion than differentiation or the nebular hypothesis is religion.

We have only to see what are the elements and ends of religion to recognise that we cannot find it in the negative and the unknown. In any reasonable use of language religion implies some kind of belief in a Power outside ourselves, some kind of awe and gratitude felt for that Power, some kind of influence exerted by it over our lives. There are always in some sort these three elements—belief, worship, conduct. A religion which gives us nothing in particular to believe, nothing as an object of awe and gratitude, which has no special relation to human duty, is not a religion at all. It may be formula, a generalisation, a logical postulate; but it is not a religion. The universal presence of the unknowable (or rather of the unknown) substratum is not a religion. It

is a logical postulate. You may call it, if you please, the first axiom of science, a law of the human mind, or perhaps better the universal postulate of philosophy. But try it by every test which indicates religion and you will find it wanting.

The points which the Unknowable has in common with the object of any religion are very slight and superficial. As the universal substratum it has some analogy with other superhuman objects of worship. But Force, Gravitation, Atom, Undulation, Vibration, and other abstract notions have much the same kind of analogy, but nobody ever dreamed of a religion of gravitation, or the worship of molecules. The Unknowable has managed to get itself spelt with a capital *U*; but Carlyle taught us to spell the Everlasting No with capitals also. The Unknowable is no doubt mysterious, and Godhead is mysterious. It certainly appeals to the sense of wonder, and the Trinity appeals to the sense of wonder. It suggests vague and infinite extension, as does the idea of deity: but then Time and Space equally suggest vague and infinite extension. Yet no one but a delirious Kantist ever professed that Time and Space were his religion. These seem all the qualities which the Unknowable has in common with objects of worship—ubiquity, mystery, and immensity. But these qualities it shares with some other postulates of thought.

But try it by all the other recognised tests of religion. Religion is not made up of wonder, or of a vague sense of immensity, unsatisfied yearning after infinity. Theology, seeking a refuge in the unintelligible, has no doubt accustomed this generation to imagine that a yearning after infinity is the sum and substance of religion. But that is a metaphysical disease of the age. And there is no reason that philosophers should accept this hysterical

piece of transcendentalism, and assume that they have found the field of religion when they have found a field for unquenchable yearning after infinity. Wonder has its place in religion, and so has mystery; but it is a subordinate place. The roots and fibres of religion are to be found in love, awe, sympathy, gratitude, consciousness of inferiority and of dependence, community of will, acceptance of control, manifestation of purpose, reverence for majesty, goodness, creative energy, and life. Where these things are not, religion is not.

Let us take each one of these three elements of religion —belief, worship, conduct—and try them all in turn as applicable to the Unknowable. How mere a phrase must any religion be of which neither belief, nor worship, nor conduct can be spoken! Imagine a religion which can have no believers, because, *ex hypothesi*, its adepts are forbidden to believe anything about it. Imagine a religion which excludes the idea of worship, because its sole dogma is the infinity of Nothingness. Although the Unknowable is logically said to be Something, yet the something of which we neither know nor conceive anything is practically nothing. Lastly, imagine a religion which can have no relation to conduct; for obviously the Unknowable can give us no intelligible help to conduct, and *ex vi termini* can have no bearing on conduct. A religion which could not make any one any better, which would leave the human heart and human society just as it found them, which left no foothold for devotion, and none for faith; which could have no creed, no doctrines, no temples, no priests, no teachers, no rites, no morality, no beauty, no hope, no consolation; which is summed up in one dogma—the Unknowable is everywhere, and Evolution is its prophet—this is indeed "to defecate religion to a pure transparency."

The growing weakness of religion has long been that it is being thrust inch by inch off the platform of knowledge; and we watch with sympathy the desperate efforts of all religious spirits to maintain the relations between knowledge and religion. And now it hears the invitation of Evolution to abandon the domain of knowledge, and to migrate to the domain of no-knowledge. The true Rock of Ages, says the plilosopher, is the Unknowable. To the eye of Faith all things are henceforth *ἀκαταλῃψία*, as Cicero calls it. The paradox would hardly be greater if we were told that true religion consisted in unlimited Vice.

What is religion for? Why do we want it? And what do we expect it to do for us? If it can give us no sure ground for our minds to rest on, nothing to purify the heart, to exalt the sense of sympathy, to deepen our sense of beauty, to strengthen our resolves, to chasten us into resignation, and to kindle a spirit of self-sacrifice—what is the good of it? The Unknowable, *ex hypothesi*, can do none of these things. The object of all religion, in any known variety of religion, has invariably had some quasi-human and sympathetic relation to man and human life. It follows from the very meaning of religion that it could not effect any of its work without such quality or relation. It would be hardly sane to make a religion out of the Equator or the Binomial theorem. Whether it was the religion of the lowest savage, of the Polytheist, or of the Hegelian Theist; whether the object of the worship were a river, the Moon, the Sky, Apollo, Thor, God, or First Cause, there has always been some chain of sympathy—influence on the one side, and veneration on the other. However rudimentary, there must be a belief in some Power influencing the believer, and whose influence he repays with awe and gratitude and a desire to conform

his life thereto. But to make a religion out of the Unknowable is far more extravagant than to make it out of the Equator. We know something of the Equator; it influences seamen, equatorial peoples, and geographers not a little, and we all hesitate, as was once said, to speak disrespectfully of the Equator. But would it be blasphemy to speak disrespectfully of the Unknowable? Our minds are a blank about it. As to acknowledging the Unknowable, or trusting in it, or feeling its influence over us, or paying gratitude to it, or conforming our lives to it, or looking to it for help—the use of such words about it is unmeaning. We can wonder at it, as the child wonders at the "twinkling star," and that is all. It is a religion only to stare at.

Religion is not a thing of star-gazing and staring, but of life and action. And the condition of any such effect on our lives and our hearts is some sort of vital quality in that which is the object of the religion. The mountain, sun, or sky which untutored man worships is thought to have some sort of vital quality, some potency of the kind possessed by organic beings. When mountain, sun, and sky cease to have this vital potency, educated man ceases to worship them. Of course all sorts and conditions of divine spirits are assumed in a pre-eminent degree to have this quality, and hence the tremendous force exerted by all religions of divine spirits. Philosophy and the euthanasia of theology have certainly reduced this vital quality to a minimum in our day, and I suppose Dean Mansel's Bampton Lectures touched the low-water mark of vitality as predicated of the Divine Being. Of all modern theologians, the Dean came the nearest to the Evolution negation. But there is a gulf which separates even his all-negative deity from Mr. Spencer's impersonal, unconscious, unthinking, and unthinkable Energy.

Knowledge is of course wholly within the sphere of the Known. Our moral and social science is, of course, within the sphere of knowledge. Moral and social well-being, moral and social education, progress, perfection, naturally rest on moral and social science. Civilisation rests on moral and social progress. And happiness can only be secured by both. But if religion has its sphere in the Unknown and Unknowable, it is thereby outside all this field of the Known. In other words Religion (of the Unknowable type) is *ex hypothesi* outside the sphere of knowledge, of civilisation, of social discipline, of morality, of progress, and of happiness. It has no part or parcel in human life. It fills a brief and mysterious chapter in a system of philosophy.

By their fruits you shall know them is true of all sorts of religion. And what are the fruits of the Unknowable but the Dead Sea apples? Obviously it can teach us nothing, influence us in nothing, for the absolutely incalculable and unintelligible can give us neither ground for action nor thought. Nor can it touch any one of our feelings, but that of wonder, mystery, and sense of human helplessness. Helpless, objectless, apathetic wonder at an inscrutable infinity may be attractive to a metaphysical divine: but it does not sound like a working force in the world. Does the Evolutionist commune with the Unknowable in the secret silence of his chamber? Does he meditate on it, saying, in quietness and confidence shall be your strength? One would like to see the new *Imitatio Ignoti*. It was said of old, *Ignotum omne pro magnifico*. But the new version is to be *Ignotum omne pro divino*.

One would like to know how much of the Evolutionist's day is consecrated to seeking the Unknowable in a devout way, and what the religious exercises might be.

How does the man of science approach the All-Nothingness? and the microscopist, and the embryologist, and the vivisectionist? What do they learn about it, what strength or comfort does it give them? Nothing—nothing: it is an ever-present conundrum to be everlastingly given up, and perpetually to be asked of oneself and one's neighbours, but without waiting for the answer. Tantalus and Sisyphus bore their insoluble tasks, and the Evolutionist carries about his riddle without an answer, his unquenchable thirst to know that which he only knows he can never know. *Quisque suos patimur Manes.* But Tantalus and Sisyphus called it Hell and the retribution of the Gods. The Evolutionist calls it Religion, and one might almost say Paradise.

A child comes up to our Evolutionist friend, looks up in his wise and meditative face, and says, "Oh! wise and great Master, what is religion?" And he tells that child, "It is the presence of the Unknowable." "But what," asks the child, "am I to believe about it?" "Believe that you can never know anything about it." "But how am I to learn to do my duty?" "Oh! for duty you must turn to the known, to moral and social science." And a mother wrung with agony for the loss of her child, or the wife crushed by the death of her children's father, or the helpless and the oppressed, the poor and the needy, men, women, and children, in sorrow, doubt, and want, longing for something to comfort them and to guide them, something to believe in, to hope for, to love, and to worship—they come to our philosopher and they say, "Your men of science have routed our priests, and have silenced our old teachers. What religious faith do you give us in its place?" And the philosopher replies (his full heart bleeding for them) and he says, "Think on the Unknowable."

And in the hour of pain, danger, or death, can any one think of the Unknowable, hope anything of the Unknowable, or find any consolation therein? Altars might be built to some Unknown God, conceived as a real being, knowing us, though not known by us yet. But altars to the unknowable infinity, even metaphorical altars, are impossible, for this Unknown can never be known, and we have not the smallest reason to imagine that it either knew us, or affects us, or anybody, or anything. As the Unknowable cannot bring men together in a common belief or for common purposes, or kindred feeling, it can no more unite men than the precession of the equinoxes can unite them. So there can never be congregations of Unknowable worshippers, nor churches dedicated to the Holy Unknowable, nor images nor symbols of the Unknowable mystery. Yes! there is one symbol of the infinite Unknowable, and it is perhaps the most definite and ultimate word that can be said about it. The precise and yet inexhaustible language of mathematics enables us to express, in a common algebraic formula, the exact combination of the unknown raised to its highest power of infinity. That formula is $(x^{\infty})$, and here we have the beginning and perhaps the end of a symbolism for the religion of the Infinite Unknowable. Schools, academies, temples of the Unknowable, there cannot be. But where two or three are gathered together to worship the Unknowable, there the algebraic formula may suffice to give form to their emotions: they may be heard to profess their unwearying belief in $(x^{\infty})$, even if no weak brother with ritualist tendencies be heard to cry, "O $x^{\infty}$, love us, help us, make us one with thee!"

These things have their serious side, and suggest the real difficulties in the way of the theory. The alternative is this: Is religion a mode of answering a question

in ontology, or is it an institution for affecting human life by acting on the human spirit? If it be the latter, then there can be no religion of the Unknowable, and the sphere of religion must be sought elsewhere in the Knowable. We may accept with the utmost confidence all that the evolution philosophy asserts and denies as to the perpetual indications of an ultimate energy, omnipresent and unlimited, and, so far as we can see, of inscrutable mysteriousness. That remains an ultimate scientific idea, one no doubt of profound importance. But why should this idea be dignified with the name of religion, when it has not one of the elements of religion, except infinity and mystery? The hallowed name of religion has meant, in a thousand languages, man's deepest convictions, his surest hopes, the most sacred yearnings of his heart, that which can bind in brotherhood generations of men, comfort the fatherless and the widow, uphold the martyr at the stake, and the hero in his long battle. Why retain this magnificent word, rich with the associations of all that is great, pure, and lovely in human nature, if it is to be henceforth limited to an idea, that can only be expressed by the formula ($x^n$); and which by the hypothesis can have nothing to do with either knowledge, belief, sympathy, hope, life, duty, or happiness? It is not religion, this. It is a logician's artifice to escape from an awkward dilemma.

One word in conclusion to those who would see religion a working reality, and not a logical artifice. The startling *reductio ad absurdum* of relegating religion to the unknowable is only the last step in the process which has gradually reduced religion to an incomprehensible *minimum*. And this has been the work of theologians obstinately fighting a losing battle, and withdrawing at every defeat into a more impregnable and narrower fast-

ness. They have thrown over one after another the claims of religion and the attributes of divinity. They are so hopeless of continuing the contest on the open field of the known that they more and more seek to withdraw to the cloud-world of the transcendental. They are so terribly afraid of an anthropomorphic God that they have sublimated him into a metaphorical expression—"defecated the idea to a pure transparency," as one of the most eminent of them puts it. Dean Mansel is separated from Mr. Spencer by degree, not in kind. And now they are pushed by Evolution into the abyss, and are solemnly assured that the reconciliation of Religion and Science is effected by this religion of the Unknowable—this *chimæra bombinans in vacuo.* Their Infinites and their Incomprehensibles, their Absolute and their Unconditioned, have brought them to this. It is only one step from the sublime to the unknowable.

Practically, so far as it affects the lives of men and women in the battle of life, the Absolute and Unconditioned Godhead of learned divines is very much the same thing as the Absolute Unknowable. You may rout a logician by a "pure transparency," but you cannot check vice, crime, and war by it, nor train up men and women in holiness and truth. And the set of all modern theology is away from the anthropomorphic and into the Absolute. In trying to save a religion of the spirit-world, theologians are abandoning all religion of the real world; they are turning religion into formulas and phrases, and are taking out of it all power over life, duty, and society.

I say, in a word, unless religion is to be anthropomorphic, there can be no working religion at all. How strange is this new cry, sprung up in our own generation, that religion is dishonoured by being anthropomorphic! Fetichism, Polytheism, Confucianism, Mediæval Christi-

anity, and Bible Puritanism have all been intensely anthropomorphic, and all owed their strength and dominion to that fact. You can have no religion without kinship, sympathy, relation of some human kind between the believer, worshipper, servant, and the object of his belief, veneration, and service. The Neo-Theisms have all the same mortal weakness that the Unknowable has. They offer no kinship, sympathy, or relation whatever between worshipper and worshipped. They too are logical formulas begotten in controversy, dwelling apart from man and the world. If the formula of the Unknowable is ($x^n$) or the Unknown raised to infinity, theirs is ($nx$), some unknown expression of Infinity. Neither ($x^n$) nor ($nx$) will ever make good men and women.

If we leave the region of formulas and go back to the practical effect of religion on human conduct, we must be driven to the conclusion that the future of religion is to be, not only what every real religion has ever been, anthropomorphic—but frankly anthropic. The attempted religion of Spiritism has lost one after another every resource of a real religion, until *risu solvuntur tabulæ*, and it ends in a religion of Nothingism. It is the Nemesis of Faith in spiritual abstractions and figments. The hypothesis has burst, and leaves the Void. The future will have then to return to the Knowable and the certainly known, to the religion of Realism. It must give up explaining the Universe, and content itself with explaining human life. Humanity is the grandest object of reverence within the region of the real and the known, Humanity with the World on which it rests as its base and environment. Religion, having failed in the superhuman world, returns to the human world. Here religion can find again all its certainty, all its depth of human sympathy, all its claim to command and reward the purest

self-sacrifice and love. We can take our place again with all the great religious spirits who have ever moulded the faith and life of men, and we find ourselves in harmony with the devout of every faith who are manfully battling with sin and discord. The way for us is the clearer as we find the religion of Spiritism, in its long and restless evolution of thirty centuries, ending in the legitimate deduction, the religion of the Unknowable, a paradox as memorable as any in the history of the human mind. The alternative is very plain. Shall we cling to a religion of Spiritism when philosophy is whittling away spirit to Nothing? Or shall we accept a religion of Realism, where all the great traditions and functions of religion are retained unbroken?

# RETROGRESSIVE RELIGION.

By HERBERT SPENCER.

# RETROGRESSIVE RELIGION.*

In days when duelling was common, and its code of ceremonial well elaborated, a deadly encounter was preceded by a polite salute. Having by his obeisance professed to be his antagonist's very humble servant, each forthwith did his best to run him through the body.

This usage is recalled to me by the contrast between the compliments with which Mr. Harrison begins his

* Excepting its last section, this article had been written, and part of it sent to the printers, by the 30th of May; and, consequently, before I saw the article of Sir James Stephen, published in the last number of this Review. Hence the fact that only in its last section have I been able (without undue interruption of my argument) to refer to points in Sir James Stephen's criticism.

Concerning his criticism generally, I may remark that it shows me how dangerous it is to present separately, in brief space, conclusions which it has taken a large space to justify. Unhappily, twelve pages do not suffice for adequate exposition of a system of thought, or even of its bases; and misapprehension is pretty certain to occur if a statement contained in twelve pages, is regarded as more than a rude outline. If Sir James Stephen will refer to §§ 49–207 of the "Principles of Sociology," occupying 350 pages, I fancy that instead of seeming to him "weak," the evidence there given of the origin of religious ideas will seem to him very strong; and I venture also to think that if he will refer to "First Principles" §§ 24–26, § 50, §§ 58–61, § 194, and to the "Principles of Psychology" §§ 347–351, he may find that what he thinks "an unmeaning playing with words" has more meaning than appears at first sight.

article, "The Ghost of Religion," and the efforts he afterwards makes to destroy, in the brilliant style habitual with him, all but the negative part of that which he applauds. After speaking with too-flattering eulogy of the mode in which I have dealt with current theological doctrines, he does his best, amid flashes of wit coming from its polished surface, to pass the sword of his logic through the ribs of my argument, and let out its vital principle—that element in it which is derived from the religious ideas and sentiments that have grown up along with human evolution, but which is inconsistent with the creed Mr. Harrison preaches.

So misleading was the professed agreement with which he commenced his article, that, as I read on, I was some time in awakening to the fact that I had before me not a friend, but, controversially speaking, a determined enemy, who was seeking to reduce, as he would say to a ghostly form, that surviving element of religion which, as I had contended, Agnosticism contains. Even when this dawned on me, the suavity of Mr. Harrison's first manner continued so influential that I entertained no thought of defending myself. It was only after perceiving that what he modestly calls "a rider," was described by one journal as "a criticism keen, trenchant, destructive," while by some other journals kindred estimates of it were formed, that I decided to make a reply as soon as pending engagements allowed.

Recognising, then, the substance of Mr. Harrison's article as being an unsparing assault on the essential part of that doctrine which I have set forth, I shall here not scruple to defend it in the most effective way I can: not allowing the laudation with which Mr. Harrison prefaces his ridicule, to negative such rejoinders, incisive as I can make them, as will best serve my purpose.

A critic who, in a recent number of the "Edinburgh Review," tells the world in very plain language what he thinks about a book of mine, and who has been taken to task by the editor of "Knowledge" for his injustice, refers to Mr. Harrison (whom he describes in felicitous phrase as looking at me from "a very opposite pole") as being, on one point, in agreement with him.* But for this reference it would not have occurred to me to associate in thought Mr. Harrison's criticisms with those of the Edinburgh Reviewer; but now that comparison is suggested, I am struck by the fact that Mr. Harrison's representations of my views diverge from the realities no less widely than those of a critic whose antagonism is unqualified, and whose animus is displayed in his first paragraph.

So anxious is Mr. Harrison to show that the doctrine he would discredit has no kinship to the doctrines called religious, that he will not allow me, without protest, to use the language needed for conveying my meaning. The expression "an Infinite and Eternal Energy from which all things proceed," he objects to as being "perhaps a rather equivocal reversion to the theologic type;" and he says this because "in the Athanasian Creed the Third Person 'proceeds' from the First and the Second." It is hard that I should be debarred from thus using the word by this preceding use. Perhaps Mr. Harrison will be surprised to learn that, as originally written, the expression ran—"an Infinite and Eternal Energy by which all things are created and sustained;" and that in the proof I struck out the last clause because, though the words did not express more than I meant, the ideas associated with them might mislead, and there might result such an in-

* "Knowledge," March 14, 1884.

sinuation as that which Mr. Harrison makes. The substituted expression, which embodies my thought in the most colourless way, I cannot relinquish because he does not like it—or rather, indeed, because he does not like the thought itself. It is not convenient to him that the Unknowable, which he repeatedly speaks of as a pure negation, should be represented as that through which all things exist. And, indeed, it would greatly embarrass him to recognise this; since the recognition would prevent him from asserting that "none of the positive attributes which have ever been predicated of God can be used of this Energy."

Not only does he, as in the last sentence, negatively misdescribe the character of this Energy, but he positively misdescribes it. He says—"It remains always Energy, Force: nothing anthropomorphic; such as electricity, or anything else that we might conceive as the ultimate basis of all the physical forces." Now, on page 30 of the essay Mr. Harrison criticises, there occurs the sentence—"The final outcome of that speculation commenced by the primitive man, is that the Power manifested throughout the Universe distinguished as material, is the same power which in ourselves wells up under the form of consciousness;" and on page 32 it is said that "this necessity we are under, to think of the external energy in terms of the internal energy, gives rather a spiritualistic than a materialistic aspect to the Universe." Does he really think that the meaning of these sentences is conveyed by comparing the ultimate energy to "electricity"? And does he think this in face of the statement on page 32 that "phenomenal manifestations of this ultimate energy can in no wise show us what it is"? Surely that which is described as the substratum at once of material and mental existence bears towards us and towards the Universe, a

relation utterly unlike that which electricity bears to the other physical forces.

Persistent thinking along defined grooves, causes inability to get out of them; and Mr. Harrison, in more than one way, illustrates this. So completely is his thought moulded to that form of phenomenalism entertained by M. Comte, that, in spite of repeated denials of it, he ascribes it to me; and does this in face of the various presentations of an opposed phenomenalism, which I have given in the article he criticises and elsewhere. Speaking after his lively manner of the Unknown Cause as "an ever-present conundrum to be everlastingly given up," he asks—"How does the man of science approach the All-Nothingness?" Now, M. Comte describes Positivism as becoming perfect when it reaches the power "se représenter tous les divers phénomènes observables comme des cas particuliers d'un seul fait général . . . en considérant comme absolument inaccessible et vide de sens pour nous la recherche de ce qu'on appelle les *causes*, soit premières, soit finales;" * and in pursuance of this view, the Comtean system limits itself to phenomena, and deliberately ignores the existence of anything implied by the phenomena. But though M. Comte thus exhibits to us a doctrine which, performing "the happy despatch," eviscerates things and leaves a shell of appearances with no reality inside; yet I have in more than one place, and in the most emphatic way, declined thus to commit intellectual suicide. So far from regarding that which transcends phenomena as the "All-Nothingness," I regard it as the All-Being. Everywhere I have spoken of the Unknowable as the Ultimate Reality—the sole existence: all things present to consciousness being but shows of it.

* "Système de Philosophie Positive," vol. i. pp. 5 and 14.

Mr. Harrison entirely inverts our relative positions. As I understand the case, the "All-Nothingness" is that phenomenal existence in which M. Comte and his disciples profess to dwell—profess, I say, because in their ordinary thoughts they recognise an existence transcending phenomena, just as much as other people recognise it.

That the opposition between the view actually held by me and the view ascribed to me by Mr. Harrison, is absolute, will be most clearly seen on observing the contrast he draws between my view and the view of the late Dean Mansel. He says:—

> Of all modern theologians, the Dean came the nearest to the Evolution negation. But there is a gulf which separates even his all-negative deity from Mr. Spencer's impersonal, unconscious, unthinking, and unthinkable Energy.

It is quite true that there exists this gulf. But then the propositions forming the two sides of the gulf are the opposites of those which Mr. Harrison represents. For whereas, in common with his teacher Sir William Hamilton, Dean Mansel alleged that our consciousness of the Absolute is merely "a negation of conceivability;" I have, over a space of ten pages,* contended that our consciousness of the Absolute is not negative but positive, and is the one indestructible element of consciousness "which persists at all times, under all circumstances, and cannot cease until consciousness ceases"—have argued that while the Power which transcends phenomena cannot be brought within the forms of our finite thought, yet that, as being a necessary datum of every thought, belief in its existence has, among our beliefs, the highest validity of any: is not, as Sir W. Hamilton alleges, a be-

* "First Principles," § 26.

lief with which we are supernaturally "inspired," but is a normal deliverance of consciousness. Thus, as represented by Mr. Harrison, Dean Mansel's views and my own are exactly transposed. Misrepresentation could not, I think, go further.

The conception I have everywhere expressed and implied, of the relation between human life and the Ultimate Cause, if not diametrically opposed with like distinctness to the conception Mr. Harrison ascribes to me, is yet thus opposed in an unmistakable way. After suggesting that ($x^n$) would be an appropriate symbol "for the religion of the Infinite Unknowable," and amusing himself and his readers by imaginary prayers made to ($x^n$); after making a subsequent elaboration of his *jeu d'esprit* by suggesting that ($nx$) would serve for the formula of certain modern Theisms, he says of these:—

> The Neo-Theisms have all the same mortal weakness that the Unknowable has. They offer no kinship, sympathy, or relation whatever between worshipper and worshipped. They too are logical formulas begotten in controversy, dwelling apart from man and the world.

Now, considering that in the article he had before him, there is in various ways implied the view that "the power which manifests itself in consciousness is but a differently conditioned form of the power which manifests itself beyond consciousness"—considering that there, as everywhere throughout my books, the implication is that our lives, alike physical and mental, in common with all the activities, organic and inorganic, amid which we live, are but the workings of this Power, it is not a little astonishing to find it described as simply a "logical formula begotten in controversy." Does Mr. Harrison really think that he represents the facts when he describes as "dwell-

ing apart from man and the world," that Power of which man and the world are regarded products, and which is manifested through man and the world from instant to instant?

Did I not need the space for other topics, I might at much greater length contrast Mr. Harrison's erroneous versions with the true ones. I might enlarge on the fact that, though the name Agnosticism fitly expresses the confessed inability to know or conceive the nature of the Power manifested through phenomena, it fails to indicate the confessed ability to recognise the existence of that Power as of all things the most certain. I might make clear the contrast between that Comtean Agnosticism which says that "Theology and ontology alike end in the Everlasting No with which science confronts all their assertions," * and the Agnosticism set forth in "First Principles," which, along with its denials, emphatically utters an Everlasting Yes. And I might show in detail that Mr. Harrison is wrong in implying that Agnosticism, as I hold it, is anything more than silent with respect to the question of personality; since, though the attributes of personality, as we know it, cannot be conceived by us as attributes of the Unknown Cause of things, yet "duty requires us neither to affirm nor deny personality," but "to s bmit ourselves with all humility to the established limits of our intelligence" in the conviction that the choice is not "between personality and something lower than personality," but "between personality and something higher," † and that "the Ultimate Power is no more representable in terms of human consciousness than human consciousness is representable in terms of a plant's functions." ‡

* Harrison, "Ghost of Religion," p. 43.

† "First Principles," § 31. ‡ "Essays," vol. iii. p. 251.

But without further evidence, what I have said sufficiently proves that Mr. Harrison's "criticism keen, trenchant, destructive," as it was called, is destructive, not of an actual doctrine, but simply of an imaginary one. I should hardly have expected that Mr. Harrison, in common with the Edinburgh Reviewer, would have taken the course, so frequent with critics, of demolishing a *simulacrum* and walking off in triumph as though the reality had been demolished. Adopting his own figure, I may say that he has with ease passed his weapon through and through "The Ghost of Religion;" but then it is only the ghost: the reality stands unscathed.

Before passing to the consideration of that alternative doctrine which Mr. Harrison would have us accept, it will be well briefly to deal with certain of his subordinate propositions.

After re-stating in a succinct way, the hypothesis that from the conception of the ghost originated the conceptions of supernatural beings in general, including the highest, and after saying that "one can hardly suppose that Mr. Spencer would limit himself to that," Mr. Harrison describes what he alleges to be a prior, and, indeed, the primordial, form of religion. He says:—

There were countless centuries of time, and there were, and there are, countless millions of men for whom no doctrine of superhuman spirits ever took coherent form. In all these ages and races, probably by far the most numerous that our planet has witnessed, there was religion in all kinds of definite form. Comte calls it Fetichism—terms are not important: roughly, we may call it Nature-worship. The religion in all these types was the belief and worship not of spirits of any kind, not of any immaterial, imagined being *inside* things, but of the actual visible things them-

selves—trees, stones, rivers, mountains, earth, fire, stars, sun, and sky. (Pages 45, 46.)

The attitude of discipleship is not favorable to inquiry; and, as fanatical Christians show us, inquiry is sometimes thought sinful and likely to bring punishment. I do not suppose that Mr. Harrison's reverence for M. Comte has gone this length; but still it has gone far enough not only to cause his continued adherence to a doctrine espoused by M. Comte which has been disproved, but also to make him tacitly assume that this doctrine is accepted by one whose rejection of it was long ago set forth. In the "Descriptive Sociology" there are classified and tabulated statements concerning some eighty peoples; and besides these I have had before me masses of facts concerning many other peoples. An induction based on over a hundred examples, warrants me in saying that there has never existed anywhere such a religion as that which Mr. Harrison ascribes to "countless millions of men" during "countless centuries of time." A chapter on "Idol-worship and Fetich-worship" in the "Principles of Sociology" gives proof that in the absence of a developed ghost-theory, Fetichism is absent. I have shown that, whereas among the lowest races, such as the Juángs, Andamanese, Fuegians, Australians, Tasmanians, and Bushmen, there is no fetichism; fetichism reaches its greatest height in considerably-advanced societies, like those of ancient Peru and modern India: in which last place, as Sir Alfred Lyall tells us, "not only does the husbandman pray to his plough, the fisher to his net, the weaver to his loom; but the scribe adores his pen, and the banker his account-books." * And I have remarked

* "Religion of an Indian Province," "Fortnightly Review" for February, 1872, p. 131.

that, had fetichism been conspicuous among the lowest races, and inconspicuous among the higher, the statement that it was primordial might have been held proved; but that, as the facts happen to be exactly the opposite, the statement is conclusively disproved.*

Similarly with Nature-worship: regarding this as being partially distinguished from Fetichism by the relatively imposing character of its objects. In a subsequent chapter I have shown that this also, is an aberrant development of ghost-worship. Among all the many tribes and nations, remote in place and unlike in type, whose superstitions I have examined, I have found no case in which any great natural appearance or power, feared and propitiated, was not identified with a human or quasi-human personality. I am not aware that Professor Max Müller, or any adherent of his, has been able to produce a single case in which there exists worship of the great natural objects themselves, pure and simple—the heavens, the sun, the moon, the dawn, etc.: objects which, according to the mythologists, become personalized by "a disease of language." Personalization exists at the outset; and the worship is in all cases the worship of an indwelling ghost-derived being.

That these conclusions are necessitated by an exhaustive examination of the evidence, is shown by the fact that they have been forced on Dr. E. B. Tylor notwithstanding his original denunciation of other conclusions. In a lecture "On Traces of the Early Mental Condition of Man," delivered at the Royal Institution, on the 15th of March, 1867, he said:—

It is well known that the lower races of mankind account for the facts and events of the outer world by ascrib-

* "Principles of Sociology," § 162.

ing a sort of human life and personality to animals, and even to plants, rocks, streams, winds, the sun and stars, and so on through the phenomena of nature. . . . It would probably add to the clearness of our conception of the state of mind which thus sees in all nature the action of animated life and the presence of innumerable spiritual beings, if we gave it the name of Animism instead of Fetichism.

Here, having first noted that the conception of Fetichism derived by Dr. Tylor from multitudinous facts, is not like that of Mr. Harrison, who conceives Fetichism to be a worship of the objects themselves, and not a worship of their indwelling spirits, we further note that Dr. Tylor regards this ascription of souls to all objects, inanimate as well as animate, which he proposes to call Animism rather than Fetichism, as being primordial. In the earlier part of his "Primitive Culture," published in 1871 (as in vol. i. p. 431), we find a re-statement of this view; but further on we observe a modification of it, as instance the following sentence in vol. ii. p. 100:—

It seems as though the conception of a human soul, when once attained to by man, served as a type or model on which he framed not only his ideas of other souls of lower grade, but also his ideas of spiritual beings in general, from the tiniest elf that sports in the long grass, up to the heavenly Creator and Ruler of the world, the Great Spirit.

And then, in articles published in "Mind" for April and for July, 1877, Dr. Tylor represented himself as holding a doctrine identical with that set forth by me in the "Principles of Sociology;" namely, that the belief in a human ghost is original, and that the beliefs in spirits inhabiting inanimate objects, giving rise to Fetichism and Nature-worship, are derived beliefs.

An emphatic negative is thus given to Mr. Harrison's

assertion that "Nothing is more certain than that man everywhere started with a simple worship of natural objects." And if he holds that "the bearing of this on the future of religion is decisive"—if, as he says, "the religion of man in the vast cycles of primitive ages was reverence for Nature as influencing Man," and if, as he infers, "the religion of man in the vast cycles that are to come will be the reverence for Humanity as supported by Nature"—if, as it thus seems, primitive religion as conceived by him is a basis for what he conceives to be the religion of the future; then his conception of the religion of the future is, in so far, baseless.

And now I come to the chief purpose of this article—an examination of that alternative faith which Mr. Harrison has on sundry occasions set forth with so much eloquence. As originally designed, the essay, "Religion: a Retrospect and Prospect," was to include a section in which, before considering what the future of religion was likely to be, I proposed to consider what its future was *not* likely to be; and the topic to be dealt with in this section was the so-called Religion of Humanity. After collecting materials and writing ten pages, I began to perceive that, besides being not needful for my purpose, this section would form too large an excrescence. A further feeling came into play. Though I had for many years looked forward to the time when an examination of the Positivist creed would fall within the lines of my work, yet when I began to put on paper that which I had frequently thought, it seemed to me that I was making an uncalled-for attack on men whom I had every reason to admire for their high characters and their unwearying efforts for human welfare. The result was that I put aside what I had written, and gave up my long-cherished

intention. Now, however, that Mr. Harrison has thrown down the gauntlet, I take it up, at once willingly and unwillingly—willingly in so far as acceptance of the challenge is concerned, unwillingly because I feel some reluctance in dealing hard blows at a personal friend.

Surprise has been the feeling habitually produced in me on observing the incongruity between the astounding claims made by the propounder of this new creed, and the great intelligence of disciples whose faith appears proof against the shock which these astounding claims produce on ordinary minds. Those who, from a broad view of human progress, have gained the general impression that "The individual withers, and the world is more and more," must be disinclined to believe that in the future any one individual will impose on the world a government like that sought to be imposed by M. Comte; who, unable to influence any considerable number of men while he lived, consoled himself with the thought of absolutely ruling all men after his death. Met, as he complained, by "a conspiracy of silence," he was nevertheless confident that, very shortly becoming converts, mankind at large would hereafter live and move and have their being within his elaborated formulas. Papal assumption is modest compared with the assumption of "the founder of the religion of Humanity." A pope may canonise a saint or two; but M. Comte undertook the canonisation of all those men recorded in history whom he thought specially worthy of worship. And such a canonisation!—days assigned for the remembrance with honour of mythical personages like Hercules and Orpheus, and writers such as Terence and Juvenal; other days on which honours, like in degree, are given to Kant and to Robertson, to Bernard de Palissy and to Schiller, to Copernicus and to Dollond, to Otway and to Racine, to Locke

and to Fréret, to Froissart and to Dalton, to Cyrus and to Penn—such a canonisation! in which these selected men who are the Positivist saints for ordinary days, are headed by greater saints for Sundays; with the result that Socrates and Godfrey are thus placed on a par; that while a day is dedicated to Kepler, a week is dedicated to Gall; Tasso has a week assigned to him, and Goethe a day; Mozart presides over a week, and a day is presided over by Beethoven; a week is made sacred to Louis the Eleventh, and a day to Washington—such a canonisation! under which the greatest men, giving their names to months, are so selected that Frederic the Second and St. Paul alike bear this distinction; Gutemberg and Shakespeare head adjacent months; and while Bichat gives his name to a month, Newton gives his name to a week! This, which recalls the saints' calendar of the Babylonians, among whom, as Professor Sayce shows, "each day of the year had been assigned to its particular deity or patron saint," * exemplifies in but one way M. Comte's consuming passion for regulating posterity, and the colossal vanity which led him to believe that mankind would hereafter perform their daily actions as he dictated. He not only settles the hierarchy of saints who are above others to be worshipped, but he prescribes the forms of worship in minute detail. Nine sacraments are specified; prayer is to be made thrice a day; for the "daily expression of their emotions both in public and private" it is predicted that future men will use Italian; † and it is a recommended "rule of worship" of the person you adore, that "a precise idea of the place, next of the seat or the attitude, and lastly, of the dress, appro-

* "Records of the Past," vol. vii. p. 157.

† "System of Positive Polity," vol. iv. p. 85.

priate to each particular case,"* should be summoned before the mind. Add to which that in the elaborate rubric the sacred sign (replacing the sign of the cross) and derived "from our cerebral theory" (he had a phrenology of his own) consists in placing "our hand in succession on the three chief organs—those of love, order, and progress." Of banners used in "solemn processions," it is directed that "on their white side will be the holy image; on their green, the sacred formula of Positivism;" and "the symbol of our Divinity will always be a woman of the age of thirty, with her son in her arms."† Nor was M. Comte's devouring desire to rule the future satisfied with thus elaborating the observances of his cult. He undertook to control the secular culture of men, as well as that culture which, I suppose, he distinguished as sacred. There is "a Positivist library for the nineteenth century," consisting of 150 volumes: the list being compiled for the purpose "of guiding the more thoughtful minds."‡ So that M. Comte's tastes and judgments in poetry, science, history, etc., are to be the standards for future generations. And the numerous regulations of these kinds are in addition to the other multitudinous regulations contained in those parts of the highly elaborated "System of Positive Polity," in which M. Comte prescribes the social organisation, under the arrangements of which "the affective, speculative, patrician, and plebeian" classes are to carry on the business of their lives.

It is, I say, not a little remarkable that a height of assumption exceeding that ever before displayed by a human being—a self-deification along with the deification of Hu-

* "Catechism," p. 100.

† "Catechism of Positivism," pp. 142, 143.

‡ Ibid. p. 38.

manity—should not have negatived belief in the general doctrines set forth by him. One might have thought that by exhibiting a lack of mental balance unparalleled among sane people, he would have wholly discredited his speculations. However, recognising the fact that this is not so, and assuming that M. Comte's disciples discover in the Religion of Humanity propounded by him, a truth which survives recognition of his—eccentricities, let us call them— we will now go on to consider this proposed creed.

To those who have studied that natural genesis of religion summarised in the article Mr. Harrison criticises,* it will appear anomalous that a proposed new and higher religion should be, in large measure, a rehabilitation of the religion with which mankind commenced, and from which they have been insensibly diverging, until the more advanced among them have quite lost sight of it. After an era during which worship of the dead was practised all the world over, alike by savages and by the progenitors of the civilised—after an era of slow emergence from this primitive religion, during which the propitiation of ghosts completely human was replaced by the propitiation of comparatively few superhuman ghosts or spirits, and finally by the propitiation of a spirit infinitely transcending humanity, and from which human attributes have been gradually dropped, leaving only the most abstract which are themselves fading; we are told by the Positivists that there is coming an era in which the Universal Power men have come to believe in, will be ignored; and human individualities, regarded now singly and now in their aggregate, will again be

* And set forth at length in the "Principles of Sociology," Part I.

the objects of religious feeling. If the worship of the dead is not to be completely resuscitated, still the proposal is to resuscitate it in a form but partially transfigured. Though there is no direction to offer at graves food and drink for ghosts, yet public worship of the so-called "Great Being Humanity" "must be performed in the midst of the tombs of the more eminent dead, each tomb surrounded by a sacred grove, the scene of the homage paid by their family and their fellow-citizens;" * while "at times within each consecrated tomb, the priesthood will" superintend the honouring of the good man or woman: † proposed usages analogous to those of many ancestor-worshipping peoples. Moreover, again taking a lesson from various races of pagans, past and present, there is to be "a domestic altar," at which, in kneeling attitude, adoration is to be paid to "our own personal patrons, our guardian angels or household gods:" ‡ these being persons living or dead. And as exemplified by M. Comte's worship of Clotilde de Vaux, the praying to a beloved person or wife may be continued for years: recalling the customs of numerous peoples who invoke departed members of their families; as instance the Balonda, among whom, if the "spot where a favorite wife has died" . . . "is revisited, it is to pray to her." #

Now omitting for the present all thought about the worthiness of these objects of worship, and considering only the general nature of the system, there arises the question—How happens it that while in other respects M. Comte delineates human evolution as progressive, he,

* "Positive Polity," vol. iv. p. 139.

† "Catechism," p. 137.

‡ "Positive Polity," vol. iv. pp. 100, 101.

\# Livingstone, "South Africa," p. 314.

in this respect, delineates it as retrogressive? Beyond all question, civilisation has been a gradual divergence from primitive savagery. According to his own account, the advance in social organisation, in knowledge, in science, in art, presents a certain general continuity. Even in speculative thought, M. Comte's formula of the three stages, the theological, the metaphysical, and the positive, tacitly asserts movement in the same direction towards a final theory. How happens it, then, that with an advancing change in other things, there is to occur a retreating change in one thing?—along with progression in all else, retrogression in religion?

This retrogressive character of the Comtean religion is shown in sundry other ways—being, indeed, sometimes distinctly admitted or avowed. Thus we are told that "the domain of the priesthood must be reconstituted in its integrity; medicine must again become a part of it," * as from savage life upwards it was until modern times. Again, education has been slowly emancipating itself from ecclesiasticism; but in M. Comte's scheme, after the sacrament of initiation, the child passes "from its unsystematic training under the eye of its mother, to the systematic education given by the priesthood;" † just as, after a parallel ceremony, the child does among the Congo people, ‡ and as it did among the ancient Mexicans.# And knowingly or unknowingly, M. Comte followed the lead of the Egyptians, who had a formal judging of the dead by the living: honourable burial was allowed by them only in the absence of accusations against the deceased proved before judges; and by M. Comte it is provided that after a prescribed interval, the priesthood shall decide

* "Catechism," p. 50. † Ibid., p. 129.

‡ Bastian (A.), "Africanische Reisen," p. 85.

# Torquemada (Juan de), "Monarquía Indiana," bk. ix. ch. 11–13.

whether the remains shall be transferred from their probationary resting-place to "the sacred wood" reserved for the "sanctified." Most remarkable of all, however, is the reversion to an early type of religious belief in the prescribed worship of objects, animate and inanimate. In "Table A, System of Sociolatry," there are times named for the "Festival of the Animals," "Festival of Fire," "Festival of the Sun," "Festival of Iron," &c.

But now, passing over M. Comte's eccentricities and inconsistencies, let us consider on its merits the creed he enunciated. In addition to private worship of guardian angels or household gods, there is to be a public worship of the "Great Being Humanity." How are we to conceive this Great Being? Various conceptions of it are possible; and more or less unlike conceptions are at one time or other presented to us. Let us look at them in succession.

By M. Comte himself, at page 74 of the "Catechism of Positive Religion," we are told that we must—

> define Humanity as *the whole* of human beings, past, present, and future. The word *whole* points out clearly that you must not take in all men, but those only who are really capable of assimilation, in virtue of a real co-operation on their part in furthering the common good.

On which the first comment suggesting itself is that the word "*whole* points out clearly" not limitation, but absence of limitation. Passing over this, however, and agreeing to exclude, as is intended, criminals, paupers, beggars, and all who "remain in the parasitic state," it seems that we are to include in the aggregate object of our worship, all who have aided, now aid, and will hereafter aid, social growth and development. Though else-

where * it is limited to those who "co-operate willingly," yet since "the animals which voluntarily aid man" are recognised as "integral portions of the Great Being," and since the co-operation of slaves is as "voluntary" as that of horses, we seem compelled to include, not the superior men and classes only, but even those who, under a coercion such as is used to domestic animals, have helped to subdue the Earth and further the material progress of Humanity. And since the progress of Humanity has been largely aided by the spread of the higher races and accompanying extermination of the lower races, we must comprehend in our conception of this worshipful "Great Being" all those who, from the earliest savage times, have, as leading warriors and common soldiers, helped by their victories to replace inferior societies by superior ones: not only bloodthirsty conquerors like Sesostris (who is duly sanctified in the calendar), but even such cannibals as the Aztecs, who laid the basis of the Mexican civilisation.

So far from seeing in the "Great Being Humanity," as thus defined, anything worshipful, it seems to me that contemplation of it is calculated to excite feelings which it is best to keep out of consciousness.

But now, not to take the doctrine at a disadvantage, let us conceive the object of the Positivist's adoration under a better aspect. Let us consider what claims to godhood may be made for the Humanity immediately known to us. Unquestionably M. Comte's own doctrine, that there has been going on an evolution of mankind, implies that such portion of the "Great Being Humanity" as is formed by our own generation, is better than the average of those portions which have heretofore lived

* "Positive Polity," vol. iv. pp. 27, 33.

and died. What then shall we say of this better portion?

Of course we must keep out of thought all the bad conduct going on around—the prevailing dishonesty shown in adulteration by retailers and production of debased goods by manufacturers, the inefficient and dawdling work of artisans, the many fraudulent transactions of which a few are daily disclosed at trials; though why we are to exclude the blameworthy from our conception of Humanity, I do not understand. But not dwelling on this, let us contemplate first the intellectual traits, and then the moral traits, of the people who remain after leaving out the worse.

Those whose mental appetites are daily satisfied by table-talk almost wholly personal, by gossiping books and novels, and by newspapers the contents of which are usually enjoyed the more in proportion as there is in them much of the scandalous or the horrible—those who on Sundays, never working out their own beliefs, receive the weekly dole of thought called for by their state of spiritual pauperism—those who, to the ideas they received during education, add only such as are supplied by daily journals and weekly sermons, with now and then a few from books, having none of their own worth speaking of; we may be content to class as respectable in the conventional sense, though scarcely in any higher sense—still less to include them as chief components in a body exciting reverence. Even if we limit attention to those of highest culture, including all who are concerned in regulative functions, political, ecclesiastical, educational, or other, the displays of intelligence do not call forth such an emotion as that which M. Comte's theory requires us to entertain. What shall we say of the wisdom of those, including nearly all who occupy influential positions,

who persist in thinking that preparation for successful and complete living (which is the purpose of rational education) is best effected by learning to speak and write after the manner of two extinct peoples, and by gaining knowledge of their chief men, their superstitions, their deeds of war, &c.—who, in their leading school, devote two hours per week to getting some ideas about the constitution of the world they are born into, and thirty-six hours per week to construing Latin and Greek and making verses, of small sense or none; and who, in the competitive examinations they devise, give to knowledge of words double the number of marks which they give to knowledge of things? That, it seems to me, is not a very worshipful degree of intelligence which fails to recognise the obvious truth that there is an Order of Nature, pervading alike the actions going on within us and without us, to which, from moment to moment, our lives must conform under penalty of one or other evil; and that therefore our first business must be to study this Order of Nature. Nor is estimation of this intelligence raised on contemplating the outcome of this established culture, as seen in Parliament; where any proposal to judge a question by reference to general laws, or "abstract principles" as they are called, is pooh-poohed, with the tacit implication that in social affairs there is no natural law; and where, as we lately saw, three hundred select spokesmen of the nation cheered frantically when it was decided that they should continue to vow before God that they would maintain certain arrangements prescribed for them by their great, great, great, &c., grandfathers.

On turning to the moral manifestations, we find still less that is calculated to excite the required religious feeling. When multitudes of citizens belonging to the

classes distinguished as "the better," make a hero of a politician whose sole aim throughout life was success, regardless of principle, and have even established an annual commemoration of him, we are obliged to infer that the prevailing sentiments are not of a very high order. Nothing approaching to adoration is called forth by those who, on the death of a youth who went to help in killing Zulus, with whom he had no quarrel, and all that he might increase his chance of playing despot over the French, thought him worthy of high funeral honours —would, many of them, indeed, have given him the highest. No feeling of reverence arises in one's mind on thinking of people who looked on with approval or tolerance when a sailor of fortune, who has hired himself out to an Eastern tyrant to slay at the word of command, was honoured here by a banquet. A public opinion which recognises no criminality in wholesale homicide, so long as it is committed by a constituted political authority, no matter how vile, or by its foreign hired agent, is a public opinion which excites, in some at any rate, an emotion nearer to contempt than to adoration.

This emotion is not changed on looking abroad and contemplating the implied natures of those who guide, and the implied natures of those who accept the guidance. When, among a people professing that religion of peace preached to them generation after generation by tens of thousands of priests, an assembly receives with enthusiasm, as lately at the Gambetta dinner, the toast, "The French army, the highest embodiment of the French nation"—when, along with nominal acceptance of forgiveness as a Christian duty, there goes intense determination to retaliate; we are obliged to reprobate either the feeling which they actually think proper, or the hypocrisy with which they profess that the opposite feeling is

proper. On finding in another advanced society that the seats of highest culture are seats of discipline in barbarism, where the test of manhood is the giving and taking of wounds in fights arising from trivial causes or none at all, and where, last year, a single day witnessed twenty-one such encounters in one university; we are reminded more of North American Indians, among whom tortures constitute the initiation of young men, than of civilized people taught for a thousand years to do good even to enemies. Or when we see, as lately in a nation akin to the last, that an officer who declined to break at once the law of his country and the law of his religion by fighting a duel, was expelled the army; we are obliged to admit that profession of a creed which forbids revenge, by those whose deeds emphatically assert revenge to be a duty (almost as emphatically as do the lowest races of men), presents Humanity under an aspect not at all of the kind which we look for in "the adorable Great Being." Not reverence, not admiration, scarcely even respect, is caused by the sight of a hundred million Pagans masquerading as Christians.

I am told that by certain of M. Comte's disciples (though not by those Mr. Harrison represents) prayer is addressed to "holy" Humanity. Had I to choose an epithet, I think "holy" is about the last which would occur to me.

"But it is only the select human beings — those more especially who are sanctified in the Comtist calendar—who are to form the object of worship; and, for the worship of such, there is the reason that they are the benefactors to whom we owe everything."

On the first of these statements, made by some adherents of M. Comte, one remark must be that it is at vari-

ance with M. Comte's own definition of the object of worship, as quoted above; and another remark must be that, admitting such select persons to be worshipful (and I do not admit it), there is no more reason for worshiping Humanity as a whole on the strength of these best samples, than there is for worshiping an ordinary individual, or even a criminal, on the strength of the few good actions which qualified the multitudinous indifferent actions and bad actions he committed. The second of these statements, that Humanity, either as the whole defined by M. Comte or as represented by these select persons, must be adored as being the producer of everything which civilisation has brought us, and, in a measure, even the creator of our higher powers of thought and action, we will now consider. Let us hear M. Comte himself on this point :—

> Thus each step of sound training in positive thought awakens perpetual feelings of veneration and gratitude; which rise often into enthusiastic admiration of the Great Being, who is the Author of all these conquests, be they in thought, or be they in action.*

What may have been the conceptions of "veneration and gratitude" entertained by M. Comte, we cannot, of course, say; but if any one not a disciple will examine his consciousness, he will, I think, quickly perceive that veneration or gratitude felt towards any being, implies belief in the conscious action of that being—implies ascription of a prompting motive of a high kind, and deeds resulting from it: gratitude cannot be entertained towards something which is unconscious. So that the "Great Being Humanity" must be conceived as having in its incorporated form, ideas, feelings, and volitions.

* "System of Positive Polity," vol. ii. p. 45.

Naturally there follows the inquiry—"Where is its seat of consciousness?" Is it diffused throughout mankind at large? That cannot be; for consciousness is an organised combination of mental states, implying instantaneous communications such as certainly do not exist throughout Humanity. Where, then, must be its centre of consciousness? In France, of course, which, in the Comtean system, is to be the leading State; and naturally in Paris, to which all the major axes of the temples of Humanity are to point. Any one with adequate humour might raise amusing questions respecting the constitution of that consciousness of the Great Being supposed to be thus localised. But, preserving our gravity, we have simply to recognise the obvious truth that Humanity has no corporate consciousness whatever. Consciousness, known to each as existing in himself, is ascribed by him to other beings like himself, and, in a measure, to inferior beings; and there is not the slightest reason for supposing that there ever was, is now, or ever will be, any consciousness among men save that which exists in them individually. If, then, "the Great Being, who is the Author of all these conquests," is unconscious, the emotions of veneration and gratitude are absolutely irrelevant.

It will doubtless seem a paradox to say that human evolution with all its marvels is to be credited neither to Humanity as an aggregate, nor to its component individuals; but the paradox will not be difficult to justify: especially if we set out with some analogies. An apt one is supplied by that "thing of beauty," the *Euplectella*, or "Venus' flower-basket," now not uncommon as a drawing-room ornament. This fragile piece of animal architecture is not a product of any conscious creature, or of any combination of conscious creatures. It is the frame-

work unknowingly elaborated by innumerable ciliated monads—each a simple nucleated cell, with a whip-like appendage which serves, by its waving movements, to aid the drawing in and sending out of sea-water, from which nutritive matter is obtained; and it is simply by the proclivities which these monads have towards certain modes of growth and secretion, that they form, without the consciousness of any one, or of all, this complicated city they inhabit. Again, take the case of a coral island. By it we are shown that a multitude of insignificant individuals may, by their separate actions carried on without concert, generate a structure imposing by its size and stability. One of these palm-covered atolls standing, up out of vast depths in the Pacific, has been slowly built up by coral-polyps, while, through successive small stages, the ocean-bottom has subsided. The mass produced by these brainless and almost nerveless animals—each by its tentacles slowly drawing in such food as the water occasionally brings, and at intervals budding out, plant-like, a new individual—is a mass exceeding in vastness any built by men, and defies the waves in a way which their best breakwaters fail to do: the whole structure being entirely undesigned, and, indeed, absolutely unknown to its producers, individually or in their aggregate.

Prepared by these analogies, every one will see what is meant by the paradox that civilisation, whether contemplated in its great organised societies or in their material and mental products, can be credited neither to any ideal "Great Being Humanity," nor to the real beings summed up under that abstract name. Though we cannot in this case say that neither the aggregate nor its units have had any consciousness of the results wrought out, yet we may say that only after considerable advances of civilisation has this consciousness existed on the part

of a few. Communities have grown and organised themselves through the attainments of private ends, pursued with entire selfishness, and in utter ignorance of any social effects produced. If we begin with those early stages in which, among hostile tribes, one more numerous or better led than the rest, conquers them, and, consolidating them into a larger society, at the same time stops inter-tribal wars; we are shown that this step in advance is made, not only without thought of any advantage to Humanity, but often under the promptings of the basest motives in the mind of the most atrocious savage. And so onwards. It needs but to glance at such wall-paintings as those of the conquering Seti at Karnak, or to read the inscriptions in which Assyrian kings proudly narrated their great deeds, to see that personal ambitions were pursued with absolute disregard of human welfare. But for that admiration of military glory with which classical culture imbues each rising generation, it would be felt that whatever benefits these kings unknowingly wrought, their self-praising records have brought them not much more honour than has been brought to the Fijian chief Ra Undreundre by the row of nine hundred stones recording the number of victims he devoured. And though those struggles for supremacy in which, during European history, so many millions have been sacrificed, resulted in the formation of great nations fitted for the highest types of structure; yet when, hereafter, opinion is no longer swayed by public-school ethics, it will be seen that the men who effected these unions did so from desires which should class them with criminals rather than with the benefactors of mankind. With governmental organisations it was the same as with social consolidations: they arose not to secure the blessings of order, but to maintain the ruler's power. As the origi-

nal motive for preventing quarrels among soldiers was that the army might not be rendered inefficient before the enemy; so, throughout the militant society at large, the motive for suppressing conflicts was partly that of preventing hindrance to the king's wars, and partly that of asserting his authority. Administration of justice, as we know it, grew up incidentally; and began with bribing the ruling man to interfere on behalf of the complainant. Not wishes for the public weal, but wishes for private profit and power, originated the regulative organisations of societies. So has it been, too, with their industrial organisations. Acts of barter between primitive men were not prompted by thoughts of benefits to Humanity, to be eventually achieved by division of labour. When, as among various peoples, on occasions of assembling to make sacrifices at sacred places, some of the devotees took with them commodities likely to be wanted by others who would be there, and from whom needful supplies could be got in exchange, they never dreamed that they were making the first steps towards establishment of fairs, and eventually of markets: purely selfish desires prompted them. Nor on the part of the pedlars who, supplying themselves wholesale at these gatherings, travelled about selling retail, was there any beneficent intention of initiating that vast and elaborate distributing system which now exists. Neither they nor any men of their time had imagined such a system. And the like holds of improved arts, of inventions, and, in large measure, of discoveries. It was not philanthropy which prompted the clearing of wild lands for the purpose of growing food; it was not philanthropy which little by little improved the breeds of animals, and adapted them to human use; it was not philanthropy which in course of time changed the primitive plough into the finished

modern plough. Wishes for private satisfactions were the exclusive stimuli. The successive patents taken out by Watt, and his law-suits in defence of them, show that though he doubtless foresaw some of the benefits which the steam-engine would confer on mankind, yet foresight of these was not the prime mover of his acts. The long concealment of the method of fluxions by Newton, as well as the Newton-Leibnitz controversy which subsequently arose, show us that while there was perception of the benefits to science, and indirectly to Humanity, from the discoveries made by these mathematicians, yet that desires to confer these benefits were secondary to other desires—largely the love of scientific exploration itself, and, in a considerable degree, "the last infirmity of noble minds." Nor has it been otherwise with literature. Entirely dissenting, though I do, from the dictum of Johnson, that "no man but a blockhead ever wrote except for money," and knowing perfectly well that many books have been written by others than blockheads not only without expectation of profit, but with the certainty of loss; yet I hold it clear that the majority of authors do not differ from their fellow-men to the extent that the desire to confer public benefit predominates over the desire to reap private benefit: in the shape of satisfied ambition if not in the shape of pecuniary return. And it is the same with the delights given to mankind by artistic products. The mind of the artist, whether composer, painter, or sculptor, has always been in a much greater degree occupied by the pleasure of creation and the thought of reward, material or mental, than by the wish to add to men's gratifications.

But we are most clearly shown how little either any aims of an ideal "Great Being" or any philanthropic aims of individuals, have had to do with civilisation, by an instance which M. Comte himself refers to as proving

our indebtedness. He says—"Language alone might suffice to recall to the mind of everyone, how completely every creation of man is the result of a vast combination of efforts, equally extended over time and space." * Now nothing is more manifest than that language has been produced neither by the conscious efforts of the imagined "Great Being" who is the Author of all these conquests," nor by the conscious efforts of individual men. Passing over that intentional coining of words which occurs during the later stages of linguistic progress, it is undeniable that during those earlier stages which gave to languages their essential structures and vocabularies, the evolutionary process went on without the intention of those who were instrumental to it. The man who first, when discussing a probability, said *give* (i.e. grant or admit) so-and-so, and such and such follows, had no idea that by his metaphorical *give* (which became *gif*, and then *if*) he was helping to initiate a grammatical form. The original application of the word *orange* to some object like an orange in colour, was made without consciousness that the act would presently lead to enrichment of the language by an additional adjective. And so thoughout. The minute additions and modifications which have, in thousands of years, given to human speech its present perfection, arose as random changes without thought of improvement; and the good ones insensibly spread as serving better the purposes of those who adopted them.

Thus, accepting M. Comte's typical instance of the obligations under which Humanity during the past has placed individuals at present, we must say that language, having been evolved during men's intercourse without the least design on their parts of conferring benefits, and

* "Positive Polity" vol. ii. p. 48.

without the faintest consciousness of what they were doing, affords no reason whatever for regarding them with that "veneration and gratitude" which he thinks due.

"But surely 'veneration and gratitude' are due somewhere. Surely civilised society, with its complex arrangements and involved processes, its multitudinous material products and almost magical instruments, its language, science, literature, art, must be credited to some agency or other. If the 'Great Being Humanity,' considered as a whole, has not created it for us—if the individuals who have co-operated in producing it have done so while pursuing their private ends, mostly without consciousness that they were either furthering or hindering human progress, how happens it that such benefits have been achieved, and to what shall we attribute achievement of them?"

To Mr. Harrison, if his allegiance to his master is unqualified, no answer which he will think satisfactory can be given; for M. Comte negatives the recognition of any cause for the existence of human beings and the "Great Being" composed of them. It was one of his strange inconsistencies that, though he held it legitimate to inquire into the evolution of the Solar System (as is shown by his acceptance of the nebular hypothesis), and though he treats of human society as a product of evolution, yet all that region lying between the formation of planets and the origin of primitive man, was ignored by him. To those, however, who accept the doctrine of organic evolution, either with or without the doctrine of evolution at large, the obvious answer to the above question will be that if "veneration and gratitude" are due at all, they are due to that Ultimate Cause from which Humanity, individually and as a whole, in common with all other

things, has proceeded. There is nothing in embodied Humanity but what results from the properties of its units—properties mainly prehistoric, and in a small measure generated by social life. If we ask whence come these properties—these structures and functions, bodily and mental—we must go for our answer to the slow operation of those processes of modification and complication through which, with the aid of surrounding conditions, ever themselves growing more involved, there have been produced the multitudinous organic types, up to the highest. If we persist in putting question beyond question, we are carried back to those more general causes which determined the structure and composition of the Earth during its concentration; and eventually we are carried back to the nebulous mass in which there existed, undistinguished into those concrete forms we now know, the forces out of which all things contained in the Solar System have come, and in which there must have been, as Professor Tyndall expresses it, "the promise and potency of all terrestrial life." Whether we contemplate such external changes as those of stars moving ten miles per second, and those which now in hours, now in years, now in centuries, arrange molecules into a crystal; or whether we contemplate internal changes, arising in us as ideas and feelings, and arising also in the chick which but a few weeks since was a viscid yelk, we are compelled to recognise everywhere an Energy capable of all forms, and which has been ever assuming new forms from the remotest time to which science carries us back, down to the passing moment. If we take the highest product of evolution, civilised human society, and ask to what agency all its marvels must be credited, the inevitable answer is—To that Unknown Cause of which the entire Cosmos is a manifestation.

A spectator who, seeing a bubble floating on a great river, had his attention so absorbed by the bubble that he ignored the river—nay, even ridiculed anyone who thought that the river out of which the bubble arose and into which it would presently lapse, deserved recognition, would fitly typify a disciple of M. Comte, who, centring all his higher sentiments on Humanity, holds it absurd to let either thought or feeling be occupied with that great stream of Creative Power, unlimited in Space or in Time, of which Humanity is a transitory product. Even if, instead of being the dull leaden-hued thing it is, the bubble Humanity had reached that stage of iridescence of which, happily, a high sample of man or woman sometimes shows us a beginning, it would still owe whatever there was in it of beauty to that Infinite and Eternal Energy out of which Humanity has quite recently emerged, and into which it must, in course of time, subside. And to suppose that this relatively-evanescent form of existence ought to occupy our minds so exclusively as to leave no space for a consciousness of that Ultimate Existence of which it is but one form out of multitudes—an Ultimate Existence which was manifested in infinitely-varied ways before Humanity arose, and will be manifested in infinitely-varied other ways when Humanity has ceased to be, seems very strange—to me, indeed, amazing.

And here this contrast between the positivist view and my own view, equally marked now as it was at first, leads me to ask in what respects the criticisms passed on the article—"Religion: a Retrospect and Prospect," have affected its argument. Many years ago, as also by implication in that article, I contended that while Science shows that we can know phenomena only, its arguments involve no denial of an Existence beyond phenomena. In common with leading scientific men whose opinions are known to

me, I hold that it does not bring us to an ultimate negation, as the presentations of my view made by Mr. Harrison and Sir James Stephen imply; and they have done nothing to show that its outcome is negative. Contrariwise, the thesis originally maintained by me against thinkers classed as orthodox,* and re-asserted after this long interval, is that though the nature of the Reality transcending appearances cannot be known, yet that its existence is necessarily implied by all we do know—that though no conception of this Reality can be framed by us, yet that an indestructible consciousness of it is the very basis of our intelligence;† and I do not find, either in Mr. Harrison's criticisms or in those of Sir James Stephen, any endeavor to prove the untruth of this thesis. Moreover, as at first elaborated and as lately repeated, my argument was that in the discovery by Science that it could not do more than ascertain the order among phenomena, there was involved a tacit confession of impotence in presence of the Mystery of Things—a confession which brought Science into sympathy with Religion; and that in their joint recognition of an Unknowable Cause for all the effects constituting the knowable world, Religion and Science would reach a truth common to the two. I do not see that anything said by my critics has shaken this position. I held at the outset, and continue to hold, that this Inscrutable Existence which Science, in the last resort, is compelled to recognise as unreached by its deepest analyses of matter, motion, thought, and feeling, stands, towards our general conception of things, in substantially the same relation as does the Cre-

* "First Principles," § 26.

† Sir James Stephen, who appears perplexed by the distinction between a conception and a consciousness, will find an explanation of it in "First Principles," § 26.

ative Power asserted by Theology; and that when Theology, which has already dropped many of the anthropomorphic traits ascribed, eventually drops the last of them, the foundation-beliefs of the two must become identical. So far as I see, no endeavor has been made to show that this is not the case. Further I have contended originally and in the article named, that this Reality transcending appearance (which is not simply unknown as Mr. Harrison thinks it should be called, but is proved by analysis of the forms of our intelligence to be unknowable),* standing towards the Universe and towards ourselves in the same relation as an anthropomorphic Creator was supposed to stand, bears a like relation with it not only to human thought but to human feeling: the gradual replacement of a Power allied to humanity in certain traits, by a Power which we cannot say is thus allied, leaves unchanged certain of the sentiments comprehended under the name religious. Though I have argued that in ascribing to the Unknowable Cause of things such human attributes as emotion, will, and intelligence, we are using words which, when thus applied, have no corresponding ideas; yet I have also argued that we are just as much debarred from denying as we are from affirming such attributes;† since, as ultimate analysis brings us everywhere to alternative impossibilities of thought, we are shown that beyond the phenomenal order of things, our ideas of possible and impossible are irrelevant. Nothing has been said which requires me to change this view: neither Mr. Harrison's statement that "to make a religion out of the Unknowable is far more extravagant than to make it out of the Equator," nor Sir James Stephen's description of the Unknowable as "like a gigantic soap-bubble not burst but blown thinner and

* "First Principles," Part I. chapter iv. † Ibid., § 31.

thinner till it has become absolutely imperceptible," seems to me applicable. One who says that because the Infinite and Eternal Energy from which all things proceed cannot in any way be brought within the limits of human consciousness, it therefore approaches to a nonentity, seems to me like one who says of a vast number that because it passes all possibility of enumeration it is like nothing, which is also innumerable. Once more, when implying that the Infinite and Eternal Energy manifested alike within us and without us, and to which we must ascribe not only the manifestations themselves but the law of their order, will hereafter continue to be, under its transfigured form, an object of religious sentiment; I have implied that whatever components of this sentiment disappear, there must ever survive those which are appropriate to the consciousness of a Mystery that cannot be fathomed and a Power that is omnipresent. Mr. Harrison and Sir James Stephen have said nothing to invalidate this position. Lastly, let me point out that I am not concerned to show what effect religious sentiment, as hereafter thus modified, will have as a moral agent; though Mr. Harrison, by ridiculing the supposition that it will "make good men and women," seems to imply that I have argued, or am bound to argue, that it will do this. If he will refer to the "Data of Ethics" and other books of mine, he will find that modifications of human nature, past and future, I ascribe in the main to the continuous operation of surrounding social conditions and entailed habits of life; though past forms of the religious consciousness have exercised, and future forms will I believe exercise, co-operative influences.*

How, then, does the case stand? Under "Retrospect" I aimed to show how the religious consciousness arose;

* "Data of Ethics," § 62.

and under "Prospect," what *of this consciousness* must remain when criticism has done its utmost. My opponents would have succeeded had they shown, (1) that it did not arise as alleged; or (2) that some other consciousness would remain; or (3) that no consciousness would remain. They have done none of these things. Looking at the general results, it seems to me that while the things I have said have not been disproved, the things which have been disproved are things I have not said.

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# AGNOSTIC METAPHYSICS.

By FREDERIC HARRISON.

# AGNOSTIC METAPHYSICS.

TEN years ago I warned Mr. Herbert Spencer that his Religion of the Unknowable was certain to lead him into strange company. "To invoke the Unknowable," I said, "is to re-open the whole range of Metaphysics; and the entire apparatus of Theology will follow through the breach." I quoted Mr. G. Lewes's admirable remark,* "that the foundations of a Creed can rest only on the Known and the Knowable." We see the result. Mr. Spencer has developed his Unknowable into an "Infinite and Eternal Energy, by which all things are created and sustained." He has discovered it to be the Ultimate Cause, the All-Being, the Creative Power, and all the other "alternative impossibilities of thought" which he once cast in the teeth of the older theologies. Naturally there is joy over one philosopher that repenteth. The "Christian World" claims this as equivalent to the assertion that God is the mind and spirit of the universe; and the "Christian World" says these words might have been used by Butler or Paley.† This is, indeed, very true; but it is strange to find the philosophy of one who makes it a point of conscience not to enter a church described as "the fitting and natural introduction to inspiration!"

* "Problems of Life and Mind," vol. i. Preface.

† "The Christian World," June 5 and July 3, 1884.

The admirers of Mr. Spencer's genius—and I count myself among the earliest—will not regret that he has been induced to lay aside his vast task of philosophic synthesis, in order more fully to explain his views about Religion. This is, indeed, for the thoughtful, as well as the practical, world the great question of our age, and the discussion that was started by his paper * and by mine † has opened many topics of general interest. Mr. Spencer has been led to give to some of his views a certainly new development, and he has treated of matters which he had not previously touched. Various critics have joined the debate. Sir James Stephen ‡ has brought into play his Nasmyth hammer of Common Sense, and has asked the bold and truly characteristic question: "Can we not do just as well without any religion at all?" The weekly Reviews, I am told, have been poking at us their somewhat hebdomadal fun. And then Mr. Wilfrid Ward,# "the rising hope of the stern and unbending" Papists, steps in to remind us of the ancient maxim—*extra Ecclesiam nulla salus.*

I cannot altogether agree with a friend who tells me that controversy is pure evil. It is not so when it leads to a closer sifting of important doctrines; when it is inspired with friendly feeling, and has no other object than to arrive at the truth. There were no mere "compliments" in my expressions of respect for Mr. Spencer and his work. I habitually speak of him as the only living Englishman who can fairly lay claim to the name of philosopher; nay, he is, I believe, the only man in Europe now living who has constructed a real system of

* H. Spencer, in "Nincteenth Century," January and July, 1884.

† F. Harrison, in "Nineteenth Century," March, 1884.

‡ Sir J. Stephen, in "Nineteenth Century," June, 1884.

# W. Ward, in "National Review," June, 1884.

philosophy. Very much in that philosophy I willingly adopt; as a philosophical theory I accept his idea of the Unknowable. My rejection of it as the basis of Religion is no new thing. The substance of my essay on the "Ghost of Religion" I have long ago taught at Newton Hall. The difference between Mr. Spencer and myself as to what religion means is vital and profound. So deep is it that it justifies me in returning to these questions, and still further disturbing his philosophic labour. But our long friendship, I trust, will survive the inevitable dispute.

It will clear up much at issue between us if it be remembered that to me this question is one primarily of religion; to Mr. Spencer, one primarily of philosophy. He is dealing with transcendental conceptions, intelligible only to certain trained metaphysicians: I have been dealing with religion as it affects the lives of men and women in the world. Hence, if I admit with him that philosophy points to an unknowable and inconceivable Reality behind phenomena, I insist that, to ordinary men and women, an unknowable and inconceivable Reality is practically an Unreality. The Everlasting Yes which the Evolutionist metaphysician is conscious of, but cannot conceive, is in effect on the public a mere Everlasting No; and a religion which begins and ends with the mystery of the Unknowable is not religion at all, but a mere logician's formula. This is how it comes about that Mr. Spencer complains that I have misunderstood him or have not read his books, that I fail to represent him, or even misrepresent him. I cannot admit that I have either misunderstood him or misrepresented him on any single point. I have studied his books part by part and chapter by chapter, and have examined the authorities on which he relies.

He seems to think that all hesitation to accept his views will disappear if men will only turn to his "First Principles," his "Principles of Sociology," and his "Descriptive Sociology," where he has "proved" this and "disproved" that, and arrayed the arguments and the evidence for every doctrine in turn. Now, for my part, I have studied all this, to my great pleasure and profit, since the first number of "A Synthetic Philosophy" appeared. Mr. Spencer objects to discipleship, or I would say that I am in very many things one of his disciples myself. But in this matter of religion I hold still, as I have held from the first, that Mr. Spencer is mistaken as to the history, the nature, and the function of religion. It is quite true that he and I are at opposite poles in what relates to the work of religion on man and on life. In all he has written, he treats religion as mainly a thing of the mind, and concerned essentially with mystery. I say —and here I am on my own ground—that religion is mainly a thing of feeling and of conduct, and is concerned essentially with duty. I agree that religion has also an intellectual base; but here I insist that this intellectual basis must rest on something that can be known and conceived and at least partly understood; and that it cannot be found at all in what is unknowable, inconceivable, and in no way whatever to be understood.

Now, in maintaining this, I have with me almost the whole of the competent minds which have dealt with this question. Mr. Spencer puts it rather as if it were merely fanaticism on my part which prevents me from accepting his theory of Religion; as if Sir James Stephen's difficulties would disappear if he could be induced to read the "Principles of Sociology" and the rest. Mr. Spencer must remember that in his Religion of the Unknowable he stands almost alone. He is, in fact, insisting to man-

kind, in a matter where all men have some opinion, on one of the most gigantic paradoxes in the history of thought. I know myself of no single thinker in Europe who has come forward to support this religion of an Unknowable Cause, which cannot be presented in terms of consciousness, to which the words emotion, will, intelligence cannot be applied with any meaning, and yet which stands in the place of a supposed anthropomorphic Creator. Mr. George H. Lewes, who of all modern philosophers was the closest to Mr. Spencer, and of recent English philosophers the most nearly his equal, wrote ten years ago:—"Deeply as we may feel the mystery of the universe and the limitations of our faculties, *the foundations of a creed can only rest on the Known and the Knowable.*" With that I believe every school of thought but a few dreamy mystics have agreed. Every religious teacher, movement, or body, has equally started from that. For myself, I feel that I stand alongside of the religious spirits of every time and of every church in claiming for religion some intelligible object of reverence, and the field of feeling and of conduct, as well as that of awe. Every notice of my criticism of Mr. Spencer which has fallen under my eye adopted my view of the hollowness of the Unknowable as a basis of Religion. So say Agnostics, Materialists, Sceptics, Christians, Catholics, Theists, and Positivists. All with one consent disclaim making a Religion of the Unknowable. Mr. Herbert Spencer may construct an Athanasian Creed of the "Inscrutable Existence"—which is neither God nor being—but he stands as yet *Athanasius contra mundum.*[1] It is not, therefore,

[1] [In this passage Mr. Harrison complacently assumes that all the world is with him, and against Spencer, on the question of the basis of religion; but the agreement is only apparent, and the real facts very much the other way. Mr. Harrison says: "For myself I feel that I stand alongside of the religious spirits of every time and of every church, in claiming, for re-

through the hardness of my heart and the stiffness of my neck that I cannot follow him here.

Let us now sum up the various positions which Mr. Spencer would impose on us as to Religion. After his two articles and the recent discussion we can hardly mistake him, and they justify my saying that they form a gigantic paradox. Mr. Spencer maintains that:—

1. The proper object of Religion is a Something which can never be known, or conceived, or understood; to which we cannot apply the terms emotion, will, intelligence; of which we cannot affirm or deny that it is either person, or being, or mind, or matter, or indeed anything else.

2. All that we can say of it is, that it is an Inscrutable Existence or an Unknowable Cause: we can neither know nor conceive what it is, nor how it came about, nor how it operates. It is, notwithstanding, the Ultimate Cause, the All-Being, the Creative Power.

3. The essential business of Religion, so understood, is to keep alive the consciousness of a mystery that cannot be fathomed.

ligion, some intelligible object of reverence"; but if we should venture to ask what he means by "intelligible," or what "object" he adopts to exemplify it, his answers would quickly scatter "the religious spirits of every time and every church," and leave him conspicuously alone. Agnostics, Materialists, Atheists, and Skeptics, disclaim *any* basis of religion; Christians, Catholics, Theists, affirm a spiritual basis inscrutable and unsearchable; the Positivists repudiate both groups, and adopt humanity, that they may have an intelligible object on which to base religion. Explanations would therefore quickly dissolve the illusive unanimity. Mr. Spencer has no avowed or organized religious following, and his new terminology is a bar to the popular acceptance of his views in a field where words are despotic from traditional sacredness. But this by no means proves that his views have not had a powerful influence upon the active mind of the age. We know this to be so in the United States, and Mr. Harrison's assertion is insufficient to convince us that it is not also true in Europe. Mr. Harrison says he knows of "no single thinker in Europe who has come forward to support this religion of an Unknowable Cause." Yet his attack upon the doctrine has called out at least one, and he a professor of religious history in a European university. (See Appendix.)]

4. We are not concerned with the question, "What effect this religion will have as a moral agent?" or, "Whether it will make good men and women?" Religion has to do with mystery, not with morals.

These are the paradoxes to which my fanaticism refuses to assent.

Now these were the views about Religion which I found in Mr. Spencer's first article, and they certainly are repeated in his second. He says:—"The Power which transcends phenomena cannot be brought within the forms of our finite thought." "The Ultimate Power is not representable in terms of human consciousness." "The attributes of personality cannot be conceived by us as attributes of the Unknown Cause of things." "The nature of the Reality transcending appearances cannot be known, yet its existence is necessarily implied." "No conception of this Reality can be framed by us." "This Inscrutable Existence which Science, in the last resort, is compelled to recognise as unreached by its deepest analyses of matter, motion, thought, and feeling." "In ascribing to the Unknowable Cause of things such human attributes as emotion, will, intelligence, we are using words which, when thus applied, have no corresponding ideas." There can be no kind of doubt about all this. I said Mr. Spencer proposes, as the object of religion, an abstraction which we cannot conceive, or present in thought, or regard as having personality, or as capable of feeling, purpose, or thought—in familiar words, I said it was "a sort of a something, about which we can know nothing."

Mr. Spencer complains that I called this Something a negation, an All-Nothingness, an ($x^n$), and an Everlasting No. He now says that this Something is the All-Being. The Unknowable is the Ultimate Reality—the sole existence;—the entire Cosmos, as we are conscious of it, being

a mere show. In familiar words:—"Everything is nought, and the Unknowable is the only real Thing." I quite agree that this is Mr. Spencer's position as a metaphysician. It is not at all new to me, for it is worked out in his "First Principles" most distinctly. Ten years ago, when I reviewed Mr. Lewes's "Problems of Life and Mind," I criticised Mr. Spencer's Transfigured Realism as being too absolute.* I then stated my own philosophical position to be that, "our scientific conceptions within have a good working correspondence with an (assumed) reality without—we having no means of knowing whether the absolute correspondence between them be great or small, or whether there be any absolute correspondence at all." To that I adhere; and, whilst I accept the doctrine of an Unknown substratum, I cannot assent to the doctrine that the Unknowable is the Absolute Reality. But I am quite aware that he holds it, nor have I ever said that he did not. On the contrary, I granted that it might be the first axiom of science or the universal postulate of philosophy. But it is not a religion.†

I said then, and I say still, speaking with regard to religion, and from the religious point of view, that the Metaphysician's Unknowable is tantamount to a Nothing. The philosopher may choose to say that there is an Ultimate Reality which we cannot conceive, or know, or liken to anything we do know. But these subtleties of speculation are utterly unintelligible to the ordinary public. And to tell them that they are to worship this Unknowable is equivalent to telling them to worship nothing.

* "Fortnightly Review," 1874, p. 89.

† My words were that, "although the Unknowable is logically said to be Something, yet the something of which we neither know nor conceive anything is practically nothing." That is, speaking from the point of view of religion.

I quite agree that Mr. Spencer, or any metaphysician, is entitled to assert that the Unknowable is the sole Reality. But religion is not a matter for Metaphysicians—but for men, women, and children. And to them the Unknowable is Nothing. Sir James Stephen calls the distinctions of Mr. Spencer "an unmeaning play of words." I do not say that they are unmeaning to the philosophers working on metaphysics. But to the public, seeking for a religion, the Reality or the Unreality of the Unknowable is certainly an unmeaning play of words.

Even supposing that Evolution ever could bring the people to comprehend the subtlety of the All-Being, of which all things we know are only shows, the Unknowable is still incapable of supplying the very elements of Religion. Mr. Spencer thinks otherwise. He says, that although we cannot know, or conceive it, or apply to it any of the terms of life, or of consciousness, "it leaves unchanged certain of the sentiments comprehended under the name religion." "Whatever components of the religious sentiment disappear, there must ever survive those which are appropriate to the consciousness of a Mystery!" Certain of the religious sentiments are left unchanged! The consciousness of a Mystery is to survive! Is that all? "We are not concerned," says he, "to know what effect this religious sentiment will have as a moral agent!"[2] A religion without anything to be known,

[2] [With due respect, Mr. Spencer says no such thing. The sentence which Mr. Harrison professes here to quote (see p. 98) runs thus: "Lastly, let me point out that I am not concerned to show what effect religious sentiment, as hereafter thus modified, will have as a moral agent." The unmistakable meaning, as given in the context, is that, dealing in his article with the form hereafter to be assumed by the religious sentiment, it was beyond his purpose there to treat of the moral effects which might result; though he distinctly implied at the close of the paragraph a belief that moral effects would result. This statement that "I am not concerned to show," it pleases Mr. Harrison to change into "*We* are not concerned to *know*"!]

with nothing to teach, with no moral power, with some rags of religious sentiment surviving, mainly the consciousness of Mystery; this is, indeed, the mockery of Religion.

Forced, as it seems, to clothe the nakedness of the Unknowable with some shreds of sentiment, Mr. Spencer has given it a positive character, which for every step that it advances towards Religion recedes from sound Philosophy. The Unknowable was at first spoken of as an "unthinkable abstraction,"[3] and so undoubtedly it is. But it finally emerges as the Ultimate Reality, the Ultimate Cause, the All-Being, the Absolute Power, the Unknown Cause, the Inscrutable Existence, the Infinite and Eternal Energy, from which all things proceed, the Creative Power, "the Infinite and Eternal Energy, by which all things are created and sustained." It is "to stand in substantially the same relation towards our general conception of things as does the Creative Power asserted by Theology." "It stands towards the Universe, and towards ourselves, in the same relation as an anthropomorphic Creator was supposed to stand, bears a like relation with it, not only to human thought but to human feeling." In other words, the Unknowable *is* the Creator; subject to this, that we cannot assert or deny that he, she, or it, is Person, or Being, or can feel, think, or act, or do anything else that we can either know or imagine, or is such

[3] [By putting it in quotation-marks, Mr. Harrison tacitly ascribes this phrase to Mr. Spencer. Where does he find it? It certainly is not in the articles which Mr. Harrison is criticising, and we fail to find it elsewhere. If Mr. Harrison can anywhere find the Unknowable spoken of by Mr. Spencer as an "unthinkable abstraction," he will prove that Mr. Spencer has committed an extraordinary oversight; because, from the very outset, in his polemic against Hamilton and Mansel, Mr. Spencer contended that the abstraction of attributes did *not* reduce the Unknowable itself to an abstraction. Recognition of this fact, however, would have destroyed Mr. Harrison's point.]

that we can ascribe to Him, Her, or It anything whatever within the realm of consciousness.

Now, the Unknowable, so qualified and explained, offends against all the canons of criticism, so admirably set forth in "First Principles," and especially those of Dean Mansel, therein quoted and adopted. The Unknowable is not unknowable if we know that "it creates and sustains all things." One need not repeat all the metaphysical objections arrayed by Mr. Spencer himself against connecting the ideas of the Absolute, the Infinite, First Cause, and Creator with that of any one Power. How can Absolute Power create? How can the Absolute be a Cause? The Absolute excludes the relative; and Creation and Cause both imply relation. How can the Infinite be a Cause, or create? For if there be effect distinct from cause, or if there be something uncreated, the Infinite would be thereby limited. What is the meaning of All-Being? Does it include, or not, its own manifestation? If the Cosmos is a mere show of an Unknown Cause, then the Unknown Cause is not Infinite, for it does not include the Cosmos; and not Absolute, for the Universe is its manifestation, and all things proceed from it. That is to say, the Absolute is in relation to the Universe, as Cause and Effect. Again, if the "very notions, beginning and end, cause and purpose, relative notions belonging to human thought, are probably irrelevant to the Ultimate Reality transcending human thought" (Spencer—see this volume, p. 35), how can we speak of the Ultimate Cause, or indeed of Infinite and Eternal? The philosophical difficulties of imagining a First Cause, so admirably put by Mr. Spencer years ago, are not greater than those of imagining an Ultimate Cause. The objections he states to the idea of Creation are not removed by talking of a Creative Power

rather than a Creator God. If Mr. Spencer's new Creative Power "stands towards our general conception of things in substantially the same relation as the Creative Power of Theology," it is open to all the metaphysical dilemmas so admirably stated in "First Principles." Mr. Spencer cannot have it both ways. If his Unknowable be the Creative Power and Ultimate Cause, it simply renews all the mystification of the old theologies. If his Unknowable be unknowable, then it is idle to talk of Infinite and Eternal Energy, sole Reality, All-Being, and Creative Power. This is the slip-slop of theologians which Mr. Spencer, as much as any man living, has finally torn to shreds.

In what way does the notion of Ultimate Cause avoid the difficulties in the way of First Cause, and how is Creative Power an idea more logical than Creator? And if, as Mr. Spencer says ("First Principles," p. 35), "the three different suppositions respecting the origin of things turn out to be literally unthinkable," what does he mean by asserting that a Creative Power is the one great Reality? Mr. Spencer seems to suggest that, though all idea of First Cause, of Creator, of Absolute Existence is unthinkable, the difficulty in the way of predicating them of anything is got over by asserting that the unthinkable and the unknowable is the ultimate reality. He said ("First Principles," p. 110), "every supposition respecting the genesis of the Universe commits us to alternative impossibilities of thought;" and again, "we are not permitted to know—nay, we are not even permitted to conceive—that Reality which is behind the veil of Appearance."[4] Quite so! On that ground we have long rested

[4] [While Mr. Harrison was quoting from "First Principles" he might well have referred to the passages (pp. 89–97) in which Mr. Spencer proves, against Hamilton and Mansel, that although we can form no *conception* of

firmly, accepting Mr. Spencer's teaching. It is to violate that rule if we now go on to call it Creative Power, Ultimate Cause, and the rest. It comes then to this: Mr. Spencer says to the theologians, "I cannot allow you to speak of a First Cause, or a Creator, or an All-Being, or an Absolute Existence, because you mean something intelligible and conceivable by these terms, and I tell you that they stand for ideas that are unthinkable and inconceivable. But," he adds, "I have a perfect right to talk of an Ultimate Cause and a Creative Power, and an Absolute Existence, and an All-Being, because I mean nothing by these terms—at least, nothing that can be either thought of or conceived of, and I know that I am not talking of anything intelligible or conceivable. That is the faith of an Agnostic, which except a man believe faithfully he cannot be saved."

Beyond the region of the knowable and the conceivable we have no right to assume an infinite energy more than an infinite series of energies, or an infinite series of infinite things or nothings. We have no right to assume one Ultimate Cause, or any cause, more than an infinite series of Causes, or something which is not Cause at all. We have no right to assume that anything beyond the knowable is eternal or infinite, or anything else; we have no right to assume that it is the Ultimate Reality. There may be an endless circle of Realities, or there may

the Reality which transcends appearance, yet there remains an inexpugnable *consciousness* of it. Mr. Harrison, as many others have done, ignores the distinction insisted upon by Mr. Spencer between a conception and a consciousness; and implies that the assertion of a persistent consciousness of the Reality constitutes knowledge of it. If it be said that Mr. Spencer has applied to the Reality the words Infinite and Eternal, it is obviously because there are no other words to convey the idea that we can find no limits to it in Space or Time. Whoever seeks not to pervert his meaning, but to understand it, will recognize that he simply intends to say that just as we can neither know nor imagine the nature of the Ultimate Existence, so we can neither know nor imagine any bounds to it.]

be no Reality at all. Once leave the region of the knowable and the conceivable, and every positive assertion is unwarranted. The forms of our consciousness prove to us, says Mr. Spencer, that what lies behind the region of consciousness is not merely unknown but unknowable, that it is one, and that it is Real. The laws of mind, I reply, do not hold good in the region of the unthinkable; the forms of our consciousness cannot limit the Unknowable. All positive assertions about that "which cannot be brought within the forms of our finite thought" are therefore unphilosophical. We have always held this of the theological Creation, and we must hold it equally of the evolutionist Creation. Here is the difference between Positive Philosophy and Agnostic Metaphysics.

But if this Realism of the Unknowable offends against sound philosophy, the Worship of the Unknowable is abhorrent to every instinct of genuine Religion. There is something startling in Mr. Spencer's assertion that he "is not concerned to show what effect this religious sentiment will have as a moral agent." As in "First Principles," so now, he represents the business of Religion to be to keep alive the consciousness of a Mystery. The recognition of this supreme verity has been from the first, he says, the vital element of Religion. From the beginning it has dimly discerned this ultimate verity; and that supreme and ultimate verity is, that there is an inscrutable Mystery. If this be not retrogressive Religion, what is? Religion is not indeed to be discarded; but, in its final and perfect form, all that it ever has had of reverence, gratitude, love, and sympathy, is to be shrivelled up into the recognition of a Mystery. Morality, duty, goodness are no longer to be within its sphere. It will neither touch the heart of men nor mould the conduct; it will perpetually remind the intelli-

gence that there is a great Enigma, which, it tells us, can never be solved. Not only is religion reduced to a purely mental sphere, but its task in that sphere is one practically imbecile.

Mr. Spencer complains that I called his Unknowable "an ever-present conundrum to be everlastingly given up." But he uses words almost exactly the same; he himself speaks of "the Great Enigma which he (man) knows cannot be solved." The business of the religious sentiment is with a "consciousness of a Mystery that cannot be fathomed." It would be difficult to find for Religion a lower and more idle part to play in human life than that of continually presenting to man a conundrum, which he is told he must continually give up. One would take all this to be a bit from "Alice in Wonderland," rather than the first chapter of "Synthetic Philosophy."

I turn to some of the points on which Mr. Spencer thinks that I misunderstand or misrepresent his meaning. I cannot admit any one of these cases. In calling the Unknowable a pure negation, I spoke from the standpoint of Religion, not of Metaphysics. It may be a logical postulate, but that of which we can know nothing, and of which we can form no conception, I shall continue to call a pure negation, *as an object of worship*, even if I am told (as I now am) that it is that "by which all things are created and sustained." Such is the view of Sir James Stephen, and of every other critic who has joined in this discussion.

With respect to Dean Mansel I made no mistake; the mistake is Mr. Spencer's—not mine. I said that of all modern Theologians the Dean came the nearest to him. As we all know, in "First Principles" Mr. Spencer quotes and adopts four pages from Mansel's "Bampton

Lectures." But I said "there is a gulf which separates even his all-negative *deity* from Mr. Spencer's impersonal, unconscious, unthinking, and unthinkable Energy." Mr. Spencer says that I misrepresent him and transpose his doctrine and Mansel's, because he regards the Absolute as positive and the Dean regarded it as negative. If Mr. Spencer will look at my words again, he will see that I was speaking of Mansel's Theology, not of his Ontology. I said "*deity*," not the Absolute. Mansel, as a metaphysician, no doubt spoke of the Absolute as negative, whilst Mr. Spencer speaks of it as positive. But Mansel's idea of deity is personal, whilst Mr. Spencer's Energy is not personal. That is strictly accurate. Dean Mansel's words are, "it is our duty to think of God as personal;" Mr. Spencer's words are, "duty requires us neither to affirm nor deny personality" of the Unknown Cause. That is to say, the Dean called his First Cause God; Mr. Spencer prefers to call it Energy. Both describe this First Cause negatively; but whilst the Dean calls it a Person, Mr. Spencer will not say that it is person, conscious, or thinking. Mr. Spencer's impression then that I misrepresented him in this matter is simply his own rather hasty reading of my words.

It is quite legitimate in a question of religion and an object of worship to speak of this Unknowable Energy described as Mr. Spencer describes it, as "impersonal, unconscious, unthinking,[5] and unthinkable." The distinc-

[5] [It is a great pity that Mr. Harrison had not strictly adhered to the rule he partially follows of indicating where in Mr. Spencer's writings the quotations he makes are to be found. Here again he puts in quotation-marks, as being used by Mr. Spencer in the above connection, words which he has probably never used, and which he could not thus use without self-stultification. Mr. Spencer has simply asserted that the limits of our finite intelligence debar us from conceiving, in any true sense of that word, personality, consciousness, or thought, as attributes of the Ultimate Existence. Does Mr. Harrison need to be told that by its very nature Agnosticism as much excludes denials as it does affirmations respecting the nature

tion that, since we neither affirm nor deny of it personality, consciousness, or thought, it is not therefore impersonal, is a metaphysical subtlety. That which cannot be presented in terms of human consciousness is neither personal, conscious, nor thinking, but properly unthinkable. To the ordinary mind it is a logical formula, it is apart from man, it is impersonal and unconscious. And to tell us that this conundrum is "the power which manifests itself in consciousness," that man and the world are but its products and manifestations, that it may have (for aught we know) something higher than personality and something grander than intelligence, is to talk theologico-metaphysical jargon, but is not to give the average man and woman any positive idea at all, and certainly not a religious idea. In religion, at any rate, that which can only be described by negation is negative; that which cannot be presented in terms of consciousness is unconscious.

I shall say but little about Mr. Spencer's Ghost theory as the historical source of all religion; because it is, after all, a subordinate matter and would lead to a wide digression. I am sorry that he will not accept my (not very serious) invitation to him to modify the paradoxes thereon to be read in his "Principles of Sociology." I have always held it to be one of the most unlucky of all his sociologic doctrines, and that on psychological as well as on historical grounds. Mr. Spencer asserts that all forms of religious sentiment spring from the primitive idea of a disembodied double of a dead man. I assert that this

of the Unknowable? Mr. Harrison thinks that there is no difference between the assertion that we can not conceive of the Unknowable as having attributes like those of the human mind and the assertion that the Unknowable has no such attributes. But does this warrant him in so employing quotation-marks as to make it appear that Mr. Spencer thinks this, when he distinctly declares that he does not?]

is a rather complicated and developed form of thought; and that the simplest and earliest form of religious sentiment is the idea of the rudest savage, that visible objects around him—animal, vegetable, and inorganic—have quasi-human feelings and powers, which he regards with gratitude and awe. Mr. Spencer says that man only began to worship a river or a volcano when he began to imagine them as the abode of dead men's *spirits*. I say that he began to fear or adore them, so soon as he thought the river or the volcano had the feelings and the powers of living beings; and that was from the dawn of the human intelligence. The latter view is, I maintain, far the simpler and more obvious explanation; and it is a fault in logic to construct a complicated explanation when a simple one answers the facts. Animals think inert things of a peculiar form to be animal; so do infants. The dog barks at a shadow; the horse dreads a steam-engine; the baby loves her doll, feeds her, nurses her, and buries her.* The savage thinks the river, or the mountain beside which he lives, the most beneficent, awful, powerful of beings. There is the germ of religion. To assure us that the savage has no feeling of awe and affection for the river and the mountain, until he has evolved the elaborate idea of disembodied spirits of dead men dwelling invisibly inside them, is as idle as it would be to assure us that the love and the terror of the dog, the horse, and the baby are due to their perceiving some disembodied spirit inside the shadow, the steam-engine, or the doll.

I think it a little hard that I may not hold this com-

* [And so Mr. Harrison seems really to think that a little girl believes her doll to be alive! Of course, he also thinks that a dog, which delights in dramatizing the chase, believes that there is life in the stone which his master has thrown for him to run after; or when, having fetched a stick out of the water, he gnaws it and even rolls upon it (as a dog will do on a rabbit he has caught), he does this because he regards it as a creature he has killed!]

mon-sense view of the matter, along with almost all who have studied the question, without being told that it comes of "persistent thinking along defined grooves," and that I should accept the Ghost theory of Religion were it not for my fanatical discipleship. Does not Mr. Spencer himself persistently think along defined grooves; and does not every systematic thinker do the same? But it so happens that the Ghost theory leads to conclusions that outrage common sense. If Dr. Tylor has finally adopted it, I am sorry. But it is certain that the believers in the Ghost theory as the origin of all forms of Religion are few and far between. The difficulties in the way of it are enormous. Mr. Spencer laboriously tries to persuade us that the worship of the Sun and the Moon arose, not from man's natural reverence for these great and beautiful powers of Nature, but solely as they were thought to be the abodes of the disembodied spirits of dead ancestors. Animal worship, tree and plant worship, fetichism, the Confucian worship of heaven, all, he would have us believe, take their origin entirely from the idea that these objects contain the spirits of the dead. If this is not "persistent thinking along defined grooves," I know not what it is.

The case of China is decisive. There we have a religion of vast antiquity and extent, perfectly clear and well ascertained. It rests entirely on worship of Heaven, and Earth, and objects of Nature, regarded as organised beings, and not as the abode of human spirits. There is in the religion and philosophy of China no notion of human *spirits*, disembodied and detached from the dead person, conceived as living in objects and distinct from dead bodies. The dead are the dead; not the spiritual denizens of other things. In the face of this, the vague language of missionaries and travellers as to the beliefs

of savages must be treated with caution. Mr. Spencer speaks in too confident language of his having "proved" and "disproved" and "shown" all these things in his "Descriptive Sociology" and in his "Principles of Sociology." How many competent persons has he convinced? Assuredly, for my part, I read and re-read all that he there says about the genesis of religion with amazement. We read these authorities for ourselves, and we cannot see that they bear out his conclusions. It was a pity to refer to the tables in the "Descriptive Sociology," perhaps the least successful of all Mr. Spencer's works. That work is a huge file of cuttings from various travellers of all classes, extracted by three gentlemen whom Mr. Spencer employed. Of course these intelligent gentlemen had little difficulty in clipping from hundreds of books about foreign races sentences which seem to support Mr. Spencer's doctrines. The whole proceeding is too much like that of a famous lawyer who wrote a law-book, and then gave it to his pupils to find the "cases" which supported his law. It is a little suspicious[1] that we find so often at the head of each "superstition" of the lower races a heading in almost the same words to the effect:—"Dreams, regarded as visits from the spirits of departed relations." The intelligent gentlemen employed have done their work very well; but of course one can find in this medley of tables almost any view. And I find facts which make for my view as often as any other.

[1] [Mr. Harrison betrays here a very imperfect acquaintance with Mr. Spencer's sociological tables. If, instead of being so ready to draw from his suspicion a positive inference, and to base on it a tacit charge, he had examined the tables a little more carefully, he would have discovered that each column habitually commences with facts belonging to a particular class where they are found to exist; and, had he compared the columns with one another throughout, he would have ascertained that, besides that general classification which arranges the columns into a table, there is within each column a sub-classification, entailing everywhere that trait which, in the case in point, he finds so suspicious.]

Fetichism, says Mr. Spencer, is not found in the lowest races. Be that as it may, it is found wherever we can trace the germs of religion. Well! I read in the "Descriptive Sociology" that Mr. Burton, perhaps the most capable of all African travellers, declares that "fetichism is still the only faith known in East Africa." In other places, we read of the sun and moon, forests, trees, stones, snakes, and the like regarded with religious reverence by the savages of Central Africa. "The Damaras attribute the origin of the sheep to a large stone." They regard a big tree as the origin of Damaras. "Cattle of a certain colour are venerated by the Damaras." "To the Bechuanas rain appears as the giver of all good." "The negro whips or throws away a worthless fetich." "The Hottentots and Bushmen shoot poisoned arrows at the lightning and throw old shoes at it." Exactly! and do these Damaras, Bechuanas, and Bushmen do this solely because they think that the sun and moon, the lightning, the rain, the trees, the cattle, and the snakes are the abodes of the disembodied spirits of their dead relatives? And do they never do this until they have evolved a developed Ghost theory?

This is more than I can accept, for all the robustness of faith which Mr. Spencer attributes to me. Whilst I find in a hundred books that countless races of Africa and the organised religion of China attribute human *qualities* to natural objects, and grow up to regard those objects with veneration and awe, I shall continue to think that fetichism, or the reverent ascription of feeling and power to natural objects, is a spontaneous tendency of the human mind. And I shall refuse, even on Mr. Spencer's high authority, and that of his three compilers, to believe that it is solely a result of a developed *Ghost theory.* To ask us to believe this as "proved" on the

strength of a pile of clippings made to order is, I think, quite as droll to ordinary minds as anything Mr. Spencer can pick up out of the Positivist Calendar.

## II.

I pass now to consider the fifteen pages of Mr. Spencer's article in which he attacks the writings of Auguste Comte. And I begin by pointing out that this was not at all the issue between us, so that this attack savours of the device known to lawyers as "prejudice," or "abusing the plaintiff's attorney." I gave reasons for thinking that the Unknowable could never be the foundation of a Creed. I added, in some twenty lines at most, that Humanity could be. Throughout my article I did not refer to Comte. My argument was entirely independent of any religious ordinances whatever, whether laid down by Comte or anyone else. Mr. Mill, in his work on Comte, has emphatically asserted that Humanity is an idea pre-eminently fitted to be the object of religion. And very many powerful minds agree with Mr. Mill so far, though they do not accept the organised form of that religion as Auguste Comte conceived it. To what degree, and in what sense, I myself accept it is not doubtful; for I have striven for years past to make it known in my public utterances. But, until I put forward Auguste Comte as an infallible authority, until I preach or practise everything laid down in the "Positive Polity," it is hardly an answer to me in a philosophical discussion to jest for the fiftieth time about Comte's arrogance, or about the banners to be used in the solemn processions, or about addressing prayers to "holy" Humanity. My friends and I address no prayers to Humanity as "holy" or otherwise; we use no banners, and we never speak of Comte as Mahometans speak of Mahomet, or as Buddhists speak of Buddha. For my own

part, I am continually saying, and I say it deliberately now, that I look upon very much that Comte threw out for the future as tentative and purely Utopian. Since I have held this language for many years in public, I do not think that Mr. Spencer is justified in describing me as a blind devotee. And when he parries a criticism of his own philosophy, by ridiculing practices and opinions for which I have never made myself responsible, I hardly think he is acting with the candid mind which befits the philosopher in all things.

For this reason I shall not trouble myself about the "eccentricities" which he thinks he can discover in the writings of Comte. A thousand eccentricities in Comte would not make it reasonable in Spencer to worship the Unknowable; and it would be hard indeed to match the eccentricity of venerating as the sole Reality that of which we only know that we can know nothing and imagine nothing. But there are other good reasons for declining to discuss with Mr. Spencer the writings of Comte. The first is that he knows nothing whatever about them. To Mr. Spencer the writings of Comte are, if not the Absolute Unknowable, at any rate the Absolute Unknown. I have long endeavoured to persuade Mr. Spencer to study Comte, all the more as he owes to him so much indirectly through others. But, so far as I know, I have not induced him to do so. And his recent criticisms of these writings show the same thing. They add nothing, I may say, to the criticism contained in the work of Mr. Mill, or indeed to the obvious witticisms to be read any week in the "Saturday Review." To turn over the pages of the "Positive Polity" and find many things which seem paradoxical is an exercise easy enough; but to grasp the conceptions of Comte, or indeed of any philosopher, seriously, is labour of a different kind.

Nothing is easier than to make cheap ridicule of any philosopher whatever. The philosopher necessarily works in a region of high abstraction, and largely employs the resources of deduction. He is bound by his office to deal freely with wide generalisations; and to follow his principles across all apparent obstacles. Every philosopher accordingly falls from time to time into astounding paradoxes; he is always accused by the superficial of arrogance; by the wits of absurdity; by the public of blindness. It is the fate of philosophers; and the charges, it must be allowed, are often founded in reason. Descartes, Hobbes, Leibnitz, Hegel, may in turn be attacked for certain hypotheses of theirs as the most arrogant of men and the wildest of sophists. How often has Mr. Spencer shared the same fate! There are those who think that no other living man has ever ventured on assertions at once so dogmatic and so paradoxical. I have too much respect for Mr. Spencer to quote any one of these wonderful bits of philosophic daring. I recognise in him a real philosopher of a certain order, and I seek to understand his system as a whole; nor am I dismayed in my studies by a thousand things in his theories, which certainly do seem to me very hard sayings. Mr. Spencer has himself just published a very remarkable work, "the Man *versus* the State;" to which he hardly expects to make a convert except here and there, and about which an unfriendly critic might say that it might be entitled "Mr. Spencer against All England." I shall not certainly criticise him for that. But it is a signal instance of the isolated position assumed from time to time by philosophers. Philosophers, who live, not so much in "glass houses" as in very crystal palaces of their own imagination, of all people, one would think, should give up the pastime of throwing stones at their neighbour's constructions.

I give an instance of the way in which Mr. Spencer misunderstands Comte. Mr. Spencer speaks of Comte's Historical Calendar as a "canonisation," as a list of "saints," to be "worshipped" day by day, as a means of "regulating posterity," and as part of the "deification" of Humanity. And he further represents this list of historical names as a strictly classified selection of men in degree of personal merit. Now every part of this view is an error. So far from this calendar being permanently imposed on posterity, Comte himself speaks of it as provisional, to serve a temporary purpose. And what is that purpose? Why, to impress on the mind the general course of human civilisation. Comte calls it "a concrete view of man's history." It is not meant to be a classification in real order of merit. It is not essentially personal at all. The names are given and always spoken of as "types," concrete embodiments of manifold elements in the civilisation of the past. Over and over again Comte says that the type and its place are often chosen without reference to personal merit to represent a class, a nation, or a movement. They are not called, or treated of as "saints." There is no "canonisation," no "worship," no ascription of perfection, or absolute merit of any kind. The whole scheme from beginning to end is, what Comte calls it, a concrete view of man's history, a mode of impressing on the minds of modern men what they owe in so many ways to men in the past. The exigencies of a calendar, with its months, weeks, and days preclude any real classification of merit; nor is any such thing attempted. It is a mode of teaching history, using the artifice of associating the names of certain famous men with months, weeks, and days. And the object is to impress on the mind the multiplicity of the forces and elements which make up civilisation. To

suppose that all names which occupy similar places represent men of exactly equal merit is a gratuitous piece of absurdity introduced into a fine conception. Even in the Church Calendar there is St. Paul's Day and St. Swithin's Day, though no one supposes that St. Swithin is regarded as the equal of St. Paul. But Comte's Historical Calendar has no analogy with the Catholic Calendar at all. It is a concrete view of history, intended to commemorate the sum of human civilisation.*

I shall certainly not enter into any defence of it. It seems to me the best synthetic scheme of history which has ever been constructed on a single page. But I am far from supposing it perfect, nor do I doubt that it might easily be amended or revised. Mr. Spencer seems astounded that Cyrus and Godfrey, Terence and Juvenal, Froissart and Palissy, should hold in it the places they do. To discuss that question would involve a long historical argument, and I am not at all disposed to enter into any historical argument with Mr. Spencer. With all his scientific learning and his manifold gifts, Mr. Spencer is seldom regarded as having much to tell us within the historical field. It is here that his inferiority to Comte is most strikingly seen. Those who know the harmonious power with which Comte has called forth

* A single example may show with how little care Mr. Spencer has looked at Comte. He complains that Comte should put Bichat above Newton, because he finds that Bichat heads a month in the Calendar, and Newton a week. Now, Comte never instituted any personal comparison between Newton and Bichat. But he explained that for the last month, which represents the course of modern science, he must choose a biologist and not a mathematician, on the ground of the superior importance of Biology. The Calendar was constructed more than thirty years ago, when certainly a thoroughly adequate type of Biology was not quite accessible. For grounds fully explained, he chose Bichat. Newton takes his place with the mathematicians; but any idea that Bichat's intellect was superior to Newton's has not the smallest authority in anything said by Comte.

into life the vast procession of the ages can best judge how weak by his side Mr. Spencer appears. In Mr. Spencer's theory of history the past teaches little but a few Quaker-like maxims; that it is very like a savage to fight, and that military activity and superstition are the sources of all evil.[8] Certainly Comte, as heartily as Spencer, has condemned the military spirit in this age, and the continuance of all fictitious beliefs. But he is not so blind to facts that he does not recognise the historical uses of the military life in the past, and the beauty of many theological types. And thus it is that he feels honour for Godfrey the Crusader, as well as for Socrates the philosopher; for the conquerors Cyrus and Sesostris, as well as for Penn the Quaker, and St. Paul the Apostle.

There is a certain "fallacy of the Den" running through Mr. Spencer's historical notions, of which his article gives very striking examples. Possessed by his theory of indefinite "differentiation," the course of civilisation presents itself to his mind as a perpetual development of new forces—progression in a constant series of divergent lines. According to this view of history, an institution, an idea, an energy which the civilisation of to-day has abandoned is finally condemned; to revive it, even under new forms, is retrogression. Since savages respected their ancestors, it would be savage to respect our ancestors. Since we have been tending, during the

[8] [There is no excuse for such loose and misleading statements concerning Mr. Spencer's views by a man like Frederic Harrison. In the "Study of Sociology" (pp. 192–6), there is a definite account of the ways in which human progress has been, during past times, aided by war; and in "Political Institutions" (pp. 241–2), not only is "our indebtedness to war" recognized, but it is asserted that without it there never would have been any civilization. Moreover, in the work to which Mr. Harrison has just referred, "The Man *vs.* The State," it is contended that "the way to the developed industrial type, as we now know it, is through the militant type"; and that there is no other way.]

last two or three centuries, to lessen all temporal and spiritual influence on the individual, we must go on until we have reduced both to zero. Since war is inhuman, the qualities and habits which the military life promoted are equally abominable. To revive anything which modern society has discarded is retrogression. For the test with Mr. Spencer is not whether it is relatively good or bad for man, but is found in the fact of Evolution absolutely.

Now, this error affects all that Mr. Spencer says about the history of civilisation. The truth is, as Comte has so wonderfully shown, the story of man's development is a tale of continual revival, reconstruction, and fresh adjustments of social life. Old habits, thoughts, and energies spring into a new life, under altered forms, and in new co-ordination. Development means not indefinite differentiation, but continuous growth, with organic re-adjustment of the organism to its environment. And that organic re-adjustment is constantly demanding the renewal of dormant elements, and the new uses of old things. I should be sorry to think that Humanity were for ever condemned to lose everything which the taste of this somewhat cynical, material and democratic generation is pleased to throw off. The phrase Retrogressive Religion does not frighten me at all. Any religion that the Future of Man is to have will be retrogressive in this sense; that it will revive something of religious feelings which were once more active in the world than they happen to be to-day. Whether an enthusiastic regard for the welfare of our human race be retrogressive religion or not I care little. I should have thought it to be a new and a progressive type of creed, more so than the worship of the Ultimate Cause, and the Creative Power, and the All-Being; where I find, indeed

(and where the "Christian World" finds also), retrogression into Metaphysic and Theology.

## III.

I turn now to the question—if Humanity be an adequate object of religion?—a question, as I say, independent of the forms in which Comte proposed to constitute it. Mr. Mill, with all his hostility to Positivism, asserted emphatically that it was; and he went so far as to say that every other type of religion would be the better, in so far as it approached the religion of Humanity. And first let us note that Mr. Spencer has given a quite exaggerated sense to what we mean by Religion and Humanity by attaching to these ideas theological associations. The same thing is done by Sir James Stephen, and by all our theological critics. Mr. Spencer asks, What are the claims of Humanity to "Godhood"? Sir James Stephen talks of "Mr. Harrison's God," of "the shadow of a God," and he says he would as soon "worship" the ugliest idol in India as the human race. All this is to foist in theological ideas where none are suggested by us. Humanity is neither the shadow of God nor the substitute for God, nor has it any analogy with God. No one claims any "godhood" for humanity or any perfection of any kind. We do not ask anyone to "worship" it, as Hindoos worship idols, or as Christians worship God or the Virgin. If it misleads people, I am quite willing to spell humanity with a small "h," or not to use the word at all. I am quite content to speak of the human race, if that makes things clearer; I am ready to give up the word "worship," if that is a stumbling-block, and to speak of showing affection and reverence. If people mean by religion going down on their knees

and invoking a supernatural being, I will wait till the word "religion" has lost these associations.

The very purpose of the Positive Scheme is to satisfy rational people that, though the ecstatic "worship" of supernatural divinities has come to an end, intelligent love and respect for our human brotherhood will help us to do our duty in life. So stated, the proposition is almost a truism; it is undoubtedly the practical conviction of millions of good people, and, as it seems, is that of Sir James Stephen. In plain words, the Religion of Humanity means recognising your duty to your fellow-man on human grounds. This is the sum and substance of that which it pleases some critics and some philosophers to represent as a grotesque delusion. Whatever is grotesque in the idea is derived from the extravagance with which they themselves distort that idea. I have no wish to "worship" Humanity in any other sense than as a man may worship his own father and mother. A good man feels affection and reverence for his father and his mother; he can cultivate that feeling and make it the spring of conduct. And the feeling is not destroyed by his finding that his father and mother had the failings of men and women. Something of the affection, and more of the sense of brotherhood, which a man feels towards his own parents, he feels towards his family; not a little of it even to his home, his city, or his province, and much of it towards his country. Every good and active man recognises the tie that binds him to a widening series of groups of his kinsmen and fellow-men. In that feeling there are elements of respect, elements of affection, and elements of devotion, in certain degrees. That sense of respect, affection, and devotion can be extended wider than country. It can be extended, I say, as far as the human race itself. And since patriotism does not stop

with our actual contemporaries, but extends to the memories and the future of our countrymen, so, I maintain, our feeling for the human race must include what it has been, as well as what it is to be. This is all that I mean by the religion of humanity. What is there of "grotesque," of the ugliest of Hindoo idols, and all the rest of it, in so common-place an opinion?

All good and even all decent men about us daily order their lives under a more or less effective sense of their social duties. They live more or less for their wives, their children, their parents, their family. I do not deny that they live largely for themselves also: but with good men and good women the two strands of motive are beautifully bound in one. And the better the man, the more close is the harmony between his social and his personal life. Outside their family, men have other strong ties of duty and of regard for definite social groups. They will do much for their friends, their party, their profession, their church, their academy, their class, their city, their country. It is disgraceful to proclaim oneself indifferent to these claims: to refuse to make any sacrifice for them, to deny that we owe them anything, or that we feel any regard for them. There is nothing very heroic about all this in the average; and it is always more or less mixed up with personal motives. But in the main it is good and wholesome, and bears noble witness to the marvellous social nature of man. Now I do not say that this in itself is religion. But I mean by religion this sense of social duty, pushed to its full extent, strengthened by a sound view of human nature, and warmed by the glow of imagination and sympathy. It has been said in a vague way that religion is "morality touched by emotion." The religion of Humanity, as I conceive it, is simply *morality fused with social devotion and enlightened by sound philosophy.*

Yet men who are known to live under a practical sense of their social duties, men who would be ashamed to profess total unconcern for father, mother, wife and child, friends and fellow-citizens, are not ashamed to exhaust the terms of opprobrium for the collective notion of humanity; which after all is only made up of a multitude of fathers, mothers, wives, children, friends, fellow-citizens, and fellow-men. Mr. Spencer's whole life (as his friends know even better than the world) has been one of unfaltering devotion to his great mistress Philosophy, worthy to compare with any in the roll of the "lovers of wisdom." Sir James Stephen is no less widely known, not only for his indefatigable public services, but for his hearty private character: a devoted public servant, who, it is said, sentences even the worst criminal "gently, as if he loved him," under a strong sense of public duty. Yet these eminent men, whose entire lives are filled with social, rather than personal, energy, have no words strong enough (for controversial purposes) to express their contempt for the human race. Mankind, says Mr. Spencer, is "a bubble," "a dull leaden-hued thing." Sir James Stephen says it is "a stupid, ignorant, half-beast of a creature;" and he would as soon worship the ugliest Hindoo idol, before which the natives chop off the heads of goats. Why, this is the raving of Timon of Athens! These men are not cynics, but merely philosophers attacking an opponent. To my mind all this is sheer nonsense. Men, known to be generous and self-devoted in every duty of social life, are not believed when they utter tirades of this kind against mankind and human nature.

If the human race be "a half-beast of a creature," if it be this dismal "bubble," what else or what better have we? Why should they, or any man, waste lives of effort in its service; what is the worth of anything generous,

humane, and social? Humanity, I say, is nothing but the sum of all the forces of individual men and women; and if it be this mere bubble and half-beast, the men and women that make it up, and the human feelings and forces which have created it, must be equally worthy of our loathing and contempt. In that case our only philosophy is a malignant pessimism, exceeding anything ever attempted in misanthropy before. I am no optimist; and I certainly see no "godhood" in the human race. I am as much alive to the vice and weakness of the human race as any one. But I feel, in common with the great majority of sound-hearted men, that there is a great deal of human nature in the human race, and that of good human nature; that the good abundantly predominates, and that the great story of human progress is on the whole a worthy and an inspiring record. At any rate, this planet, and, so far as we know, this Universe, has nothing (in the moral sphere) which is more worthy and more inspiring of hope. *Nec viget quidquam simile, aut secundum.* Divinities, and Absolute Goodnesses, and Absolute Powers have ended for us. The relative goodness and power of our race remains a solid reality. It is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh; the stuff whereof our mothers, and our fathers, our sons and our friends, our fellow-citizens are made: whereof are made all who with us and beside us are striving to live a humane life.

I will not do my friends the injustice of supposing that any regard for men which they acknowledge is confined to their own belongings and circles, and that for the rest of mankind they feel (what they assert) supreme contempt and dislike. Their words would suggest it. To Mr. Spencer Europe presents nothing but the revolting prospect of "a hundred millions of Pagans masquerading as Christians." Sir James Stephen says that a ma-

jority of the human race cannot read, and devote their time to nothing but daily labour. Are they mere beasts for that? Some of the greatest and best of men could not read; some of the noblest natures on earth are spent in the hovel and the garret of the poor. It is the task of the religion of Humanity to correct such anti-social thoughts, the besetting sin of the philosopher and the man of power. It will teach their pride that the nobility of human nature is to be found chiefly in the cottage and the workshop; where the untaught mother is lavishing on her children unutterable wealth of tenderness; where the patient toiler is subduing the earth that for the common good wise men may have an earth whereon to think out the truth, and the poet and the artist may have materials to satisfy us all with beauty.

Comte, of all men, did not choose out five hundred names to be "worshipped" as "saints," devoting the five hundred millions to oblivion. He taught us to see the greatness of human nature in the love and courage of the ignorant, as well as in the genius and the might of the hero. And when we think of Humanity our minds are not set on a band of the "elect," but on the millions who people this earth and subdue it, leaving each century on the whole a richer inheritance in comfort, in thought, in virtue; millions, not in the civilised world only, but in the rude plains of Asia, and of Africa, where the Hindoo struggles to rear an honest household in his plot of rice-field, and the fellah yields to the will of Heaven with sublime patience, whilst retaining uncrushed his human heart. Assuredly it is no "godhood" that we see there, no pride of human reason, no millennium, or transfiguration of Man. But it is human nature, sound down to its depths; rich with unfathomable love wherever there is a mother and a child, and rich with undying courage wher-

ever there is the father of an honest and thriving household.

But it is not the present generation which absorbs our thoughts. Mankind, as we see it to-day, is neither god-like nor very sublime. But the story of human progress during fifty centuries, from the "half-beast" that it once was in the pre-historic ages down to the ideal civilisation which we surely foresee in the far-off ages to come—this is sublime. Or, if not sublime in the way in which the fairy-tale of Paradise, or the Creation of the Universe, is sublime, it is still the most splendid tale of *moral development* of which we have any certain record. I am not at all disenchanted when I am reminded of the savagery, the bestiality, or even the cannibalism of man's early career. There were noble savages even in the Palæolithic ages, and even the earliest type of man was superior in something, I suppose, to contemporary types of the ape. But such as he was I accept him as the ancestor of the human race, to whom it owes its first beginning. The glory of Humanity is not lost, in that it was once so low, but lies in that, beginning so low, it is now so high.

It is for this reason that Comte has insisted so much on the Past, and the religious value of a true conception of human civilisation. It shocks Mr. Spencer to look with anything but horror on our fighting and savage forefathers. But, such as they were, they made civilisation possible. And the grandeur of human civilisation as a whole can only be realised in the mind when it constantly dwells on the enormous record of its progress from the half-bestial beginnings out of which it has slowly arisen by incalculable efforts and hopes. Still, it is a record of much failure, of shortcoming at the best. And for this reason, Positivism dwells quite as much in the Future as in the Past. Endless progress towards a

perfection never, perhaps, to be reached, but to be ideally cherished in hope, a hope which every stroke of science and every line of history confirms to us, and with which every generous instinct of our nature beats in unison—such is the practical heaven of our faith. As there is no godhood now in humanity, so there is no Paradise in its future. Past, Present, and Future, all alike dwell on this earth; on the facts of man's actual career in the dwelling-place that he has made for himself thereon.

Mr. Spencer is himself far too much of a philosopher, and too much of a believer in moral progress, not to have a deep faith in this very march of civilisation of which humanity, as I understand it, is at once product and author. He says himself: "Surely civilised society, with its complex arrangements and involved processes, its multitudinous material products and almost magical instruments, its language, science, literature, art, must be credited to some agency or other." The words are not mine, but his. That is to say, the story of human civilisation is a very noble record, demanding, as he admits, "veneration and gratitude" somewhere. And in these words he throws to the winds "the bubble," and "the dull leaden-hued thing," "the hundred million Pagans masquerading," "the stupid, ignorant, half-beast of a creature," as the judge calls it. The human race then is not the odious bubble; on the contrary, the splendid story of human civilisation must fill us with a sense of "veneration and gratitude." But by astonishing perversity, as it seems to me, by long habit of "persistent thinking along defined grooves," Mr. Spencer has nothing but contempt for the human race, and lavishes his "veneration and gratitude," called out by the sum of human civilisation, upon his Unknowable and Inconceivable Postulate. This is to me to out-do the ingratitude

of the theologians who find "man only vile," and who ascribe every good thing in man's evil nature to an ineffable Being. Since Mr. Spencer agrees with me that "veneration and gratitude," for all that man has become, are due somewhere, I prefer to ascribe it to that human race which we know and feel; and which, so far as we can see, has fashioned its own destiny, in spite of tremendous obstacles in his environment; rather than to a logician's formula, about which the logician himself tells us that he knows nothing and conceives nothing.

Mr. Spencer has labored to prove that Humanity (which he himself has so admirably described as a real organism) is unconscious. He might have spared his pains. Neither Comte, nor any rational Positivist, has ever regarded Humanity as conscious. And, for that reason, nothing will induce me to to address Humanity as a conscious being, or in any way whatever to treat it as a Person. In that respect it stands on the same footing as Mr. Spencer's Unknowable, except that I say frankly that I have not the least reason to suppose Humanity to be conscious; whilst he will not say that his Unknowable may not be conscious (as it might be a gooseberry or a parallelopiped). And then Mr. Spencer goes on to argue that, since Humanity is not conscious, that concludes the matter; "for gratitude cannot be entertained towards something which is unconscious." And by a really curious inconsistency he asserts that "veneration and gratitude" are due towards the Unknowable, which he has just told us cannot be conceived in terms of consciousness at all! So that he will not let me feel any gratitude to the human race, my own kindred, because it is unconscious; and he asks me to bestow it all on his unconscious, or non-conscious, or outside-of-all-consciousness Unknowable.

Apart from this singular slip in logic, he says much about the unconsciousness of the human race which amazes me. Why cannot a man feel any gratitude towards that which is unconscious? He tells us to examine our consciousness. Well! Did all the gratitude which he felt during life to his own parents, teachers, and benefactors cease at the instant of their death? I cannot find it in my consciousness. My gratitude to my parents is the same, living or dead; and, if gratitude to one parent can be expressed and answered in words, whilst gratitude to the other lies but in the silent communing of the heart, I cannot find that the one gratitude differs from the other, save that this last is the deeper, more abiding feeling. And, if a man is unworthy of the name of man who can feel no gratitude to a parent or a benefactor, the moment they are laid cold in death, why cannot a man feel grateful to the school where he was trained, or the church wherein he was reared, or the country of his forefathers and his descendants? And by school, church, or country, I mean the men therein grouped, some known, some unknown, some by personal contact, some by spiritual influence, by whose labour he has reaped and grown.

Mr. Spencer goes further in the same line. Since the human race, he says, was unconscious whilst slowly evolving its own civilisation, since the individual men and women were not consciously conferring any benefits on us, and very partially foresaw the result of their own labour, we owe them no gratitude. They acted automatically or like coral-polyps by instinct, following their own natures, satisfying their own craving, and we owe them no more gratitude than we owe to hogs for fattening, or to sheep for growing woolly coats. Watt, according to this view, invented the steam-engine to make

money, or occupy his mind. Newton and Leibnitz toiled only for fame. If the poets and artists created beauty, it was because they liked beauty, and hoped for reward. I confess this seems to me to strike at the root of morality and all estimate whatever of human greatness and merit. A philosopher will tell us next that he owes no gratitude to the father who begat him, or the mother who nursed him; for both were obeying instincts which they share with the lowest animals. If heroes, poets, and thinkers are mere automata, selfishly and blindly following instincts, like the polyps working their tentacles and thereby forming a coral reef, morality, and most of the moral qualities of man, are things which we cannot predicate of man at all.

Man is no doubt a highly complex being, and his moral, intellectual, and physical natures are blended in marvellous ways. It was never pretended by the optimist that any man has acted uniformly on the noblest motives; but it has never been asserted by the pessimist that he acts invariably on the vilest. It is a mark of the meanest nature to refuse to acknowledge a benefit, on the ground that the benefactor was not wholly absorbed with the wish to benefit, or entirely aware of the extent of his benefit. For my part, I refuse to measure out my sense of gratitude to my human benefactors, known or unknown, by so niggardly a rule. I trust that Raffaelle and Shakespeare did enjoy their work. But I love and admire the genius in which they revelled. Humanity is rich with gratitude to those who knew not the value of the services they were rendering, just as it is to those whose names and services are covered in the vast wave of time. What becomes of Patriotism, if it be open to us to sneer out that the men who fought our battles or made our country wanted nothing but money or fame?

What becomes of family affection, if a man can tell his mother that bore him that if she reared children it was only what cats and rabbits do?

The religion of Humanity, as we understand it, is nothing but the idealised sum of those human feelings and duties which all decent men acknowledge in detail and in fact. All healthy morality, as well as all sound philosophy, show us that the sum total of all this mass of life is good, and is tending towards better. As Mr. Spencer admits, civilised society as a whole must command "admiration and gratitude" somewhere. This being so, the sneers of philosophers and cynics may be left out of sight. I shall not follow Mr. Spencer in the wails of his Jeremiad over the folly and wickedness of his contemporaries. Millions, he says, still go to church and chapel, instead of studying Evolution and Differentiation, or praying to the Unknowable at home. At Eton and Harrow boys are taught to make Latin verses, and not the genesis of species. The House of Commons will not let Mr. Bradlaugh take his seat; and many still admire Lord Beaconsfield. Many people were sorry when young Bonaparte was killed by the Zulus; and they gave a dinner to Hobart Pasha. At a dinner in France, the "army" was given as a toast. And German students will fight duels.[9] And for these reasons Mr. Herbert Spencer has a great contempt for his species. *Risum teneatis, amici?* I must treat this as a mere outburst of ill-humour. We all know that there is folly, vice, and misery enough in the world—and for that reason all *absolute* "worship" of anyone or anything are out of

[9] [We recommend the reader to compare this paraphrase of Mr. Spencer's reasons for not worshiping humanity with the reasons which Spencer actually gives on pages 82–85. The comparison will prove instructive, as it well exemplifies the method by which Mr. Harrison is enabled to make such telling points.]

the question. Strangely enough, Mr. Spencer, who finds this folly and vice preclude him from any respect for Humanity, does not see that it ought also to bar any "veneration and gratitude" to the Unknowable; to which he ascribes the honour of producing civilised society, in spite of all its shortcomings. For my part I am not to be shaken in my belief that the sum of civilised society is *relatively* worthy of honour, by such melancholy facts as that Mr. Bradlaugh cannot get his seat, and that German students slit each others' noses.

Mr. Spencer raises a great difficulty over the fact that there are, and have been, very evil people in the world, who cannot be included in the Humanity which we are to honour.* And he asks why they are excluded from the notion. No one has worked out the organic unity and life of the Human Organism more clearly than Mr. Spencer himself. When we think and speak of that organism, we think and speak of those organs and elements which share in its organic life, and not of the excrescences, maladies, or excrement, so to speak, which it has finally eliminated. Men have a warm regard for their family, though there may be a blackguard in it, for whom they have no regard at all. They feel loyalty to their profession or their party, though they know that it counts not a few black sheep. And patriotism is quite possible towards our countrymen past and present, though some of the worst men in history have been amongst them. We are justly proud of our English race; but when we

* He cannot reconcile Comte's definition of Humanity "*as the whole* of human beings, past, present, and future," with the statement that "the word *whole* points out that you must not take in all men." If Mr. Spencer would take some pains to understand Comte, he would see that the French word is "*ensemble*;" that is to say, Humanity includes the sum of human civilisation, but does not include every individual man, who may not have contributed at all to this *ensemble* or "sum."

speak of its achievements we are not including in our honour King John, Guy Fawkes, and Titus Oates. If the existence of a minority of evil men makes it impossible to think of Humanity as a whole, or to honour it as a whole, the same argument would make it impossible to think of country as a whole, or to honour it as a whole. And this applies also to what Mr. Spencer calls "civilised society."

The analogies of Humanity are to be found with such minor aggregates of civilised society as Family, Church, State, Country. It has no analogy at all with God, or divinity in any form. When Mr. Spencer says that we "deify" Humanity, it would be as just to say that he deifies Evolution. He thinks that Evolution is the key of our mental and moral Synthesis. I think that Humanity is. But as I do not suppose that he finds "any claims to godhood" in Evolution, I beg him not to suppose that I find any in Humanity. If Family, Church, State, Country, are real aggregates, worthy of gratitude and respect, *à fortiori*, Humanity is a real aggregate worthy of respect and gratitude. I cannot understand how the smaller aggregates can inspire us with any worthy sentiment at all, whilst the fuller aggregate of the Family of Mankind inspires nothing but contempt and aversion.

A few words on the original idea put forth by Sir James Stephen. Suppose that it turns out, he says, there is no possible object of Religion left to man, cannot he do very well without Religion altogether? It is a view that is often secretly cherished by the comfortable, the strong, and the selfish; but I am not aware that it has ever been calmly argued before as a contribution to the philosophy of religion. If his meaning be that we can do without adoration of any superhuman power, without believing anything to be above human science, or out of

the range of human life, of course I wholly agree with him. And if he thinks that mankind will get on very well by means of human education, human morality, and the sense of practical duty to our fellow-beings—then he is something of an unconscious Positivist himself, and no one will ask him to go on his knees to an abstract notion, or to go through any imitation of Christian or other theological practices which he may regard as mummery. For my part, I neither desire nor expect that Christian charity, or Christian morality of any kind, will be preserved. It will be enlarged and solidified into human charity and human morality. And adopting all that Sir James has said thereon, I claim him as speaking on my side—as he certainly repudiates Mr. Spencer.

But this human charity and human morality will never be established if the peculiar cynicism which Sir James affects about the human race were ever to prevail. He says most truly that "love, friendship, good-nature, kindness, carried to the height of sincere and devoted affection, will always be the chief pleasures of life, whether Christianity be true or false." Comte himself never put it higher, and I am thinking of quoting this sentence as the text of my next discourse at Newton Hall. But this will not be so—love, friendship, kindness, and devoted affection will not always be the chief pleasures of life—if philosophers succeed in persuading the world that the human race are a set of Yahoos. Sir James also sees that, apart from any theology whatever, the social nature of man will itself produce "a solid, vigorous, useful kind of moral standard;" and he goes on to show that this morality will have a poetic side, will affect the imagination and the heart by becoming idealised, and issuing in enthusiasm as well as conviction. O upright Judge! O most learned Judge!

I ask no more than this. The Religion of Humanity means to me this solid, vigorous, useful moral standard, based on the belief that sincere and devoted affection is the chief pleasure of life, cultivated and idealised till it produces enthusiasm. Only I insist that it will need the whole force of education through life, all the resources which engender habits, stir the imagination, and kindle self-devotion, in order to keep this spirit alive in the masses of mankind. The cultivated, the thoughtful, and the well-to-do can nourish this solid morality in a cool, self-contained, sub-cynical way. But to soften and purify the masses of mankind we shall need all the passion and faith which are truly dignified by the name of religion—religious respect, religious sense of duty, religious belief in something vastly nobler and stronger than self. They will find this in the mighty tale of human civilisation. They will never find it in the philosopher's hypothesis of an Infinite Unknowable substratum, which "cannot be presented in terms of human consciousness," of which we can know nothing and can conceive nothing. Nor do I think they will ever find it in the common-sense maxim that "this is a very comfortable world for the prudent, the lucky, and the strong."

## Postscript.

I have found no space to notice Mr. Wilfrid Ward and some of my other critics. I do not find that Mr. Ward has added much to the controversy except the rather mess-room remark that Mr. Spencer and myself are both mad. I am the less called on to examine his views, inasmuch as his own religious standpoint, I believe, is Catholicism in its most Ultramontane form—the Syllabus and the Papacy. But in whatever form he may care to present it, Catholicism is not, in my opinion, within the field of serious religious phi-

losophy. And, if the thinking world is not yet ready to accept mine, it has so long ago decided to reject his, that the question need hardly be revived in the "Nineteenth Century."

To all that he and others have said, as to the same difficulties and weaknesses confronting the idea of Humanity as meet that of the Unknowable, I could have little trouble in showing, that as we claim for Humanity nothing absolute, nothing unreal, and nothing ecstatic, no such difficulties arise. It is a strength and a comfort to all, whether weak, suffering, or bereaved, to feel that the whole sum of human effort in the past, as in the present, is steadily working, on the whole, to lessen the sum of misery, to help the fatherless and the widow, to assuage sickness, and to comfort the lonely. This is a real and solid encouragement, proved by all the facts of progressive civilisation. If it is not the comfort offered by promises of ecstatic bliss, and supernatural intervention, it has the merit of being true and humane; not egoist and untrue. If it is not enough, it is at least all that men and women on earth have. Resignation and peace will be theirs when we have taught them habitually to know that it is all—when the promises of the churches are known to be false, and the hopes of the superstitious are felt to be dreams.—F. H.

# LAST WORDS ABOUT AGNOSTICISM AND THE RELIGION OF HUMANITY.

By HERBERT SPENCER.

# LAST WORDS ABOUT AGNOSTICISM AND THE RELIGION OF HUMANITY.

THOSE who expected from Mr. Harrison an interesting rejoinder to my reply, will not be disappointed. Those who looked for points skilfully made, which either are, or seem to be, telling, will be fully satisfied. Those who sought pleasure from witnessing a display of literary power, will close his article gratified with the hour they have spent over it. Those only will be not altogether contented who supposed that my outspoken criticism of Mr. Harrison's statements and views, would excite him to an unusual display of that trenchant style for which he is famous; since he has, for the most part, continued the discussion with calmness. After saying thus much it may seem that some apology is needed for continuing a controversy of which many, if not most, readers, have by this time become weary. But gladly as I would leave the matter where it stands, alike to save my own time and others' attention, there are sundry motives which forbid me. Partly my excuse must be the profound importance and perennial interest of the questions raised. Partly I am prompted by the consideration that it is a pity to cease just when a few more pages will make clear sundry of the issues, and leave readers in a better position

for deciding. Partly it seems to me wrong to leave grave misunderstandings unrectified. And partly I am reluctant on personal grounds to pass by some of Mr. Harrison's statements unnoticed.

One of these statements, indeed, it would be imperative on me to notice, since it reflects on me in a serious way. Speaking of the "Descriptive Sociology," which contains a large part (though by no means all) of the evidence used in the "Principles of Sociology," and referring to the compilers who, under my superintendence, selected the materials forming that work, Mr. Harrison says:—

> Of course these intelligent gentlemen had little difficulty in clipping from hundreds of books about foreign races sentences which seem to support Mr. Spencer's doctrines. The whole proceeding is too much like that of a famous lawyer who wrote a law book, and then gave it to his pupils to find the "cases" which supported his law.

Had Mr. Harrison observed the dates, he would have seen that since the compilation of the "Descriptive Sociology" was commenced in 1867 and the writing of the "Principles of Sociology" in 1874, the parallel he draws is not altogether applicable: the fact being that the "Descriptive Sociology" was commenced seven years in advance for the purpose (as stated in the preface) of obtaining adequate materials for generalisations: sundry of which, I may remark in passing, have been quite at variance with my pre-conceptions.* I think that on consid-

* Elsewhere Mr. Harrison contemptuously refers to the "Descriptive Sociology," as "a pile of clippings made to order." While I have been writing, the original directions to compilers have been found by my present secretary, Mr. James Bridge; and he has drawn my attention to one of the "orders." It says that all works are "to be read not with a view to any particular class of facts but with a view to all classes of facts."

eration, Mr. Harrison will regret having made so grave an insinuation without very good warrant; and he has no warrant. Charity would almost lead one to suppose that he was not fully conscious of its implications when he wrote the above passage; for he practically cancels them immediately afterwards. He says:—"But of course one can find in this medley of tables almost any view. And I find facts which make for my view as often as any other." How this last statement consists with the insinuation that what Mr. Harrison calls a "medley" of tables contains evidence vitiated by special selection of facts, it is difficult to understand. If the purpose was to justify a foregone conclusion, how does it happen that there are (according to Mr. Harrison) as many facts which make against it as there are facts which make for it?

The question here incidentally raised concerns the primitive religious idea. Which is the original belief, fetichism or the ghost-theory? The answer should profoundly interest all who care to understand the course of human thought; and I shall therefore not apologize for pursuing the question a little further.

Having had them counted, I find that in those four parts of the "Descriptive Sociology" which give accounts of the uncivilised races, there are 697 extracts which refer to the ghost-theory: illustrating the belief in a wandering double which goes away during sleep, or fainting, or other form of insensibility, and deserts the body for a longer period at death,—a double which can enter into and possess other persons, causing disease, epilepsy, insanity, etc., which gives rise to ideas of spirits, demons, etc., and which originates propitiation and worship of ghosts. On the other hand there are 87 extracts which refer to the worship of inanimate objects or belief in their super-

natural powers. Now even did these 87 extracts support Mr. Harrison's view, this ratio of 8 to 1 would hardly justify his statement that the facts "make for my [his] view as often as any other." But these 87 extracts do not make for his view. To get proof that the inanimate objects are worshipped for themselves simply, instances must be found in which such objects are worshipped among peoples who have no ghost-theory; for wherever the ghost-theory exists it comes into play and originates those supernatural powers which certain objects are supposed to have. When by unrelated tribes scattered all over the world, we find it held that the souls of the dead are supposed to haunt the neighbouring forests—when we learn that the Karen thinks "the spirits of the departed dead crowd around him;"* that the Society Islanders imagined spirits "surrounded them night and day watching every action;"† that the Nicobar people annually compel "all the bad spirits to leave the dwelling;"‡ that an Arab never throws anything away without asking forgiveness of the Efrits he may strike;* and that the Jews thought it was because of the multitudes of spirits in synagogues "that the dress of the Rabbins become so soon old and torn through their rubbing;"‖—when we find the accompanying belief to be that ghosts or these spirits are capable of going into, and emerging from, solid bodies in general, as well as the bodies of the quick and the dead; it becomes obvious that the presence of one of these spirits swarming around, and capable of injuring or benefiting living persons, becomes a sufficient reason for

* "Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal," xxiv. part ii., p. 196.

† Ellis, "Polynesian Researches," vol. i. p. 525.

‡ "Journ. As. Soc. of Ben.," xv. pp. 848–49.

* Bastian, "Mensch," ii. 109, 113.

‖ "Supernatural Religion," 2nd ed., vol. i. p. 112.

propitiating an object it is assumed to have entered: the most trivial peculiarity sufficing to suggest possession—such possession being, indeed, in some cases conceived as universal, as by the Eskimo, who think every object is ruled by "its or his, *inuk*, which word signifies '*man*,' and also *owner* or *inhabitant*." * Such being the case, there can be no proof that the worship of the objects themselves was primordial, unless it is found to exist where the ghost-theory has not arisen; and I know no instance showing that it does so. But while those facts given in the "Descriptive Sociology" which imply worship of inanimate objects, or ascription of supernatural powers to them, fail to support Mr. Harrison's view, because always accompanied by the ghost-theory, sundry of them directly negative his view. There is the fact that an echo is regarded as the voice of the fetich; there is the fact that the inhabiting spirit of the fetich is supposed to "enjoy the savoury smell" of meat roasted before it; and there is the fact that the fetich is supposed to die and may be revived. Further, there is the summarised statement made by Beecham, an observer of fetichism in the region where it is supposed to be specially exemplified, who says that:—

> The fetiches are believed to be spiritual, intelligent beings, who make the remarkable objects of nature their residence, or enter occasionally into the images and other artificial representations, which have been duly consecrated by certain ceremonies. . . . They believe that these fetiches are of both sexes, and that they require food.

These statements are perfectly in harmony with the conclusion that fetichism is a development of the ghost-

* Dr. Henry Rink, "Tales and Traditions of the Eskimo," p. 37.

theory, and altogether incongruous with the interpretation of fetichism which Mr. Harrison accepts from Comte.

Already I have named the fact that Dr. Tylor, who has probably read more books about uncivilised peoples than any Englishman living or dead, has concluded that fetichism is a form of spirit-worship, and that (to give quotations relevant to the present issue)

To class an object as a fetish, demands explicit statement that a spirit is considered as embodied in it or communicating by it.*

. . . A further stretch of imagination enables the lower races to associate the souls of the dead with mere objects.†

. . . The spirits which enter or otherwise attach themselves to objects may be human souls. Indeed, one of the most natural cases of the fetish-theory is when a soul inhabits or haunts the relics of its former body.‡

Here I may add an opinion to like effect which Dr. Tylor quotes from the late Prof. Waitz, also an erudite anthropologist. He says:—

"According to his [the negro's] view, a spirit dwells or can dwell in every sensible object, and often a very great and mighty one in an insignificant thing. This spirit he does not consider as bound fast and unchangeably to the corporeal thing it dwells in, but it has only its usual or principal abode in it." *

Space permitting I might add evidence furnished by Sir Alfred Lyall, who, in his valuable papers published in the "Fortnightly Review" years ago on religion in India, has given the results of observations made there. Writing to me from the North-West provinces under date

* Tylor, "Primitive Culture," vol. ii. p. 133. † Ibid. p. 139.
‡ Ibid. p. 137. * Ibid. p. 144.

August 1, in reference to the controversy between Mr. Harrison and myself, he incloses copies of a letter and accompanying memorandum from the magistrate of Gorakhpur, in verification of the doctrine that ghost-worship is the "chief source and origin" of religion. Not, indeed, that I should hope by additional evidence to convince Mr. Harrison. When I point to the high authority of Dr. Tylor as on the side of the ghost-theory, Mr. Harrison says—"If Dr. Tylor has finally adopted it, I am sorry." And now I suppose that when I cite these further high authorities on the same side, he will simply say again "I am sorry," and continue to believe as before.

In respect of the fetichism distinguishable as nature-worship, Mr. Harrison relies much on the Chinese. He says:—

> The case of China is decisive. There we have a religion of vast antiquity and extent, perfectly clear and well ascertained. It rests entirely on worship of Heaven, and Earth, and objects of Nature, regarded as organized beings, and not as the abode of human spirits.

Had I sought for a case of "a religion of vast antiquity and extent, perfectly clear and well ascertained," which illustrates origin from the ghost-theory, I should have chosen that of China; where the State-religion continues down to the present day to be an elaborate ancestor-worship, where each man's chief thought in life is to secure the due making of sacrifices to his ghost after death, and where the failure of a first wife to bear a son who shall make these sacrifices, is held a legitimate reason for taking a second. But Mr. Harrison would, I suppose, say that I had selected facts to fit my hypothesis. I therefore give him, instead, the testimony of a bystander. Count D'Alviella has published a *brochure* concerning

these questions on which Mr. Harrison and I disagree.* In it he says on page 15 :—

La thèse de M. Harrison, au contraire,—que l'homme aurait commencé par l'adoration d'objets matériels "franchement regardés comme tels,"—nous paraît absolument contraire au raisonnement et à l'observation. Il cite, à titre d'exemple, l'antique religion de la Chine, "entièrement basée sur la vénération de la Terre, du Ciel et des Ancêtres, considérés objectivement et non comme la résidence d'êtres immatériels." [This sentence is from Mr. Harrison's first article, not from his second.] C'est là jouer de malheur, car, sans même insister sur ce que peuvent être des Ancêtres "considérés objectivement," il se trouve précisément que la religion de l'ancien empire Chinois est le type le plus parfait de l'animisme organisé et qu'elle regarde même les objets matériels, dont elle fait ses dieux, comme la manifestation inséparable, l'enveloppe ou même le corps d'esprits invisibles. [Here in a note Count D'Alviella refers to authorities, "notamment Tiele, *Manuel de l'Histoire des Religions*, traduit par M. Maurice Vernes, Liv. II, et dans la *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions*, la *Religion de l'ancien empire Chinois* par M. Julius Happel (t. IV. no. 6)."]

Whether Mr. Harrison's opinion is or is not changed by this array of counter-opinion, he may at any rate be led somewhat to qualify his original statement that "Nothing is more certain than that man everywhere started with a simple worship of natural objects."

I pass now to Mr. Harrison's endeavour to rebut my assertion that he had demolished a *simulacrum* and not the reality.

I pointed out that he had inverted my meaning by

* *Harrison contre Spencer sur la Valeur Religieuse de L'Inconnaissable*, par le C^te^. Goblet D'Alviella. Paris, Ernest Leroux.

representing as negative that which I regarded as positive. What I have everywhere referred to as the All-Being, he named the All-Nothingness. What answer does he make when I show that my position is exactly the reverse of that alleged? He says that while I am "dealing with transcendental conceptions, intelligible only to certain trained metaphyscians," he is "dealing with religion as it affects the lives of men and women in the world;" that "to ordinary men and women, an unknowable and inconceivable Reality is practically an Unreality;" and that thus all he meant to say was that the "Everlasting Yes" of the "evolutionist," "is in effect on the public a mere Everlasting No" (p. 105). Now compare these passages in his last article with the following passages in his first article:—"One would like to know how much of the Evolutionist's day is consecrated to seeking the Unknowable in a devout way, and what the religious exercises might be. How does the man of science approach the All-Nothingness" (p. 53)? Thus we see that what was at first represented as the unfitness of the creed considered as offered to the select is now represented as its unfitness considered as offered to the masses. What were originally the "Evolutionist" and the "man of science" are now changed into "ordinary men and women" and "the public;" and what was originally called the All-Nothingness has become an "inconceivable Reality." The statement which was to be justified is not justified, but something else is justified in its stead.

Thus is it, too, with the paragraph in which Mr. Harrison seeks to disprove my assertion that he had exactly transposed the doctrines of Dean Mansel and myself, respecting our consciousness of that which transcends perception. He quotes his original words, which were "there is a gulf which separates even his all-negative *deity*

from Mr. Spencer's impersonal, unconscious, unthinkable Energy." And he then goes on to say "I was speaking of Mansel's Theology, not of his Ontology. I said '*deity*,' not the Absolute." Very well; now let us see what this implies. Mansel, as I was perfectly well aware, supplements his ontological nihilism with a theological realism. That which in his ontological argument he represents as a mere "negation of conceivability," he subsequently re-asserts on grounds of faith, and clothes with the ordinarily-ascribed divine attributes. Which of these did I suppose Mr. Harrison meant by "all-negative deity"? I was compelled to conclude he meant that which in the ontological argument was said to be a "negation of conceivability." How could I suppose that by "all-negative deity" Mr. Harrison meant the deity which Dean Mansel as a matter of "duty" rehabilitates and worships in his official capacity as priest? It was a considerable stretch of courage on the part of Mr. Harrison to call the deity of the established church an "all-negative deity"! Yet in seeking to escape from the charge of misrepresenting me he inevitably does this by implication.

In his second article Mr. Harrison does not simply ascribe to me ideas which are wholly unlike those my words express, but he ascribes to me ideas I have intentionally excluded. When justifying my use of the word "proceed," as the most colourless word I could find to indicate the relation between the knowable manifestations present to perception and the Unknowable Reality which transcends perception, I incidentally mentioned, as showing that I wished to avoid those theological implications which Mr. Harrison said were suggested, that the words originally written were "created and sustained;" and that though in the sense in which I used them the meanings of these words did not exceed my

thought, I had erased them because "the ideas associated with these words might mislead." Yet Mr. Harrison speaks of these erased words as though I had finally adopted them, and saddles me with the ordinary connotations. If Mr. Harrison defends himself by quoting my words to the effect that the Inscrutable Existence manifested through phenomena "stands towards our general conception of things in substantially the same relation as does the Creative Power asserted by Theology;" then I point to all my arguments as clearly meaning that when the attributes and the mode of operation ordinarily ascribed to "that which lies beyond the sphere of sense" ceases to be ascribed, "that which lies beyond the sphere of sense" will bear the same relation as before to that which lies within it, in so far that it will occupy the same relative position in the totality of our consciousness: no assertion being made concerning the mode of connexion of the one with the other. Surely when I had deliberately avoided the word "create" to express the connexion between noumenal cause and the phenomenal effect, because it might suggest the ordinary idea of a creating power separate from the created thing, Mr. Harrison was not justified in basing arguments against me on the assumption that I had used it.

But the course in so many cases pursued by him of fathering upon me ideas incongruous with those I have expressed, and making me responsible for the resulting absurdities, is exhibited in the most extreme degree by the way in which he has built up for me a system of beliefs and practices. In his first article occur such passages as "seeking the Unknowable in a devout way" (p. 52); can anyone "hope anything of the Unknowable or find consolation therein?" (p. 54); and to a grieving mother he represents me as replying to assuage her grief,

"Think on the Unknowable" (p. 53). Similarly in his second article he writes "to tell them that they are to worship this Unknowable is equivalent to telling them to worship nothing" (p. 110); "the worship of the Unknowable is abhorrent to every instinct of genuine religion" (p. 116); "praying to the Unknowable at home" (p. 142); and having in these and kindred ways fashioned for me the observances of a religion which he represents me as "proposing," he calls it "one of the most gigantic paradoxes in the history of thought" (p. 107). So effectually has Mr. Harrison impressed everybody by these expressions and assertions, that I read in a newspaper—"Mr. Spencer speaks of the 'absurdities of the Comtean religion,' but what about his own peculiar cult?"

Now the whole of this is a fabric framed out of Mr. Harrison's imaginations. I have nowhere "proposed" any "object of religion." I have nowhere suggested that anyone should "worship this Unknowable." No line of mine gives ground for inquiring how the Unknowable is to be sought "in a devout way," or for asking what are "the religious exercises;" nor have I suggested that anyone may find "consolation therein." Observe the facts. At the close of my article "Religion; a Retrospect and Prospect," I pointed out to "those who think that science is dissipating religious beliefs and sentiments" "that whatever of mystery is taken from the old interpretation is added to the new:" increase rather than diminution being the result. I said that in perpetually extending our knowledge of the Universe, concrete science "enlarges the sphere for religious sentiment;" and that progressing knowledge is "accompanied by an increasing capacity for wonder." And in my second article, in further explanation, I have represented my thesis to be "that whatever components of this [the religious] sentiment disappear,

there must ever survive those which are appropriate to the consciousness of a Mystery that cannot be fathomed and a Power that is omnipresent." This is the sole thing for which I am responsible. I have advocated nothing; I have proposed no worship; I have said nothing about "devotion," or "prayer," or "religious exercises," or "hope," or "consolation." I have simply affirmed the permanence of certain components in the consciousness which "is concerned with that which lies beyond the sphere of sense." If Mr. Harrison says that this surviving sentiment is inadequate for what he thinks the purposes of religion, I simply reply—I have said nothing about its adequacy or inadequacy. The assertion that the emotions of awe and wonder form but a fragment of religion, leaves me altogether unconcerned: I have said nothing to the contrary. If Mr. Harrison sees well to describe the emotions of awe and wonder as "some rags of religious sentiment surviving" (p. 112), it is not incumbent on me to disprove the fitness of his expression. I am responsible for nothing whatever beyond the statement that these emotions will survive. If he shows this conclusion to be erroneous, then indeed he touches me. This, however, he does not attempt. Recognizing though he does that this is all I have asserted, and even exclaiming "is that all!" (p. 111) he nevertheless continues to father upon me a number of ideas quoted above, which I have neither expressed nor implied, and asks readers to observe how grotesque is the fabric formed of them.

I enter now on that portion of Mr. Harrison's last article to which is specially applicable its title "Agnostic Metaphysics." In this he recalls sundry of the insuperable difficulties set forth by Dean Mansel, in his "Bampton Lectures," as arising when we attempt to frame any

conception of that which lies beyond the realm of sense. Accepting, as I did, Hamilton's general arguments which Mansel applied to theological conceptions, I contended in "First Principles" that their arguments are valid, only on condition that that which transcends the relative is regarded not as negative, but as positive; and that the relative itself becomes unthinkable as such in the absence of a postulated non-relative. Criticisms on my reasoning allied to those made by Mr. Harrison, have been made before, and have before been answered by me. To an able metaphysician, the Rev. James Martineau, I made a reply which I may be excused here for reproducing, as I cannot improve upon it—

Always implying terms in relation, thought implies that both terms shall be more or less defined; and as fast as one of them becomes indefinite, the relation also becomes indefinite, and thought becomes indistinct. Take the case of magnitudes. I think of an inch; I think of a foot; and having tolerably-definite ideas of the two, I have a tolerably-definite idea of the relation between them. I substitute for the foot a mile; and being able to represent a mile much less definitely, I cannot so definitely think of the relation between an inch and a mile—cannot distinguish it in thought from the relation between an inch and two miles, as clearly as I can distinguish in thought the relation between an inch and one foot from the relation between an inch and two feet. And now if I endeavour to think of the relation between an inch and the 240,000 miles from here to the Moon, or the relation between an inch and the 92,000,000 miles from here to the Sun, I find that while these distances, practically inconceivable, have become little more than numbers to which I frame no answering ideas, so, too, has the relation between an inch and either of them become practically inconceivable. Now

this partial failure in the process of forming thought-relations, which happens even with finite magnitudes when one of them is immense, passes into complete failure when one of them cannot be brought within any limits. The relation itself becomes unrepresentable at the same time that one of its terms becomes unrepresentable. Nevertheless, in this case it is to be observed that the almost-blank form of relation preserves a certain qualitative character. It is still distinguishable as belonging to the consciousness of extensions, not to the consciousnesses of forces or durations; and in so far remains a vaguely-identifiable relation. But now suppose we ask what happens when one term of the relation has not simply magnitude having no known limits, and duration of which neither beginning nor end is cognizable, but is also an existence not to be defined? In other words, what must happen if one term of the relation is not only quantitatively but also qualitatively unrepresentable? Clearly in this case the relation does not simply cease to be thinkable except as a relation of a certain class, but it lapses completely. When one of the terms becomes wholly unknowable, the law of thought can no longer be conformed to; both because one term cannot be present, and because relation itself cannot be framed. . . . In brief then, to Mr. Martineau's objection I reply, that the insoluble difficulties he indicates arise here, as elsewhere, when thought is applied to that which transcends the sphere of thought; and that just as when we try to pass beyond phenomenal manifestations to the Ultimate Reality manifested, we have to symbolize it out of such materials as the phenomenal manifestations gives us; so we have simultaneously to symbolize the connexion between this Ultimate Reality and its manifestations, as somehow allied to the connexions among the phenomenal manifestations themselves. The truth Mr. Martineau's criticism adumbrates, is that the law of thought fails where the elements of thought fail; and this is a conclusion quite conformable to the general view I defend.

Still holding the validity of my argument against Hamilton and Mansel, that in pursuance of their own principle the Relative is not at all thinkable *as such*, unless in contradistinction to some existence posited, however vaguely, as the other term of a relation, conceived however indefinitely; it is consistent on my part to hold that in this effort which thought inevitably makes to pass beyond its sphere, not only does the product of thought become a dim symbol of a product, but the process of thought becomes a dim symbol of a process; and hence any predicament inferable from the law of thought cannot be asserted.*

Thus then criticisms like this of Mr. Martineau, often recurring in one shape or other, and now again made by Mr. Harrison, do not show the invalidity of my argument, but once more show the imbecility of human intelligence when brought to bear on the ultimate question. Phenomenon without noumenon is unthinkable; and yet noumenon cannot be thought of in the true sense of thinking. We are at once obliged to be conscious of a reality behind appearance, and yet can neither bring this consciousness of reality into any shape, nor can bring into any shape its connexion with appearance. The forms of our thought, moulded on experiences of phenomena, as well as the connotations of our words formed to express the relations of phenomena, involve us in contradictions when we try to think of that which is beyond phenomena; and yet the existence of that which is beyond phenomena is a necessary datum alike of our thoughts and our words. We have no choice but to accept a formless consciousness of the inscrutable.

I cannot treat with fulness the many remaining issues. To Mr. Harrison's statement that it was uncandid in me to

* "Essays," vol. iii. pp. 293–6.

implicate him with the absurdities of the Comtean belief and ritual, notwithstanding his public utterances, I reply that whereas ten years ago I was led to think he gave but a qualified adhesion to Comte's religious doctrine, such public utterances of his as I have read of late years, fervid in their eloquence, persuaded me that he had become a much warmer adherent. On his summary mode of dealing with my criticism of the Comtean creed some comment is called for. He remarks that there are "good reasons for declining to discuss with Mr. Spencer the writings of Comte;" and names, as the first, "that he knows [I know] nothing whatever about them" (p. 125). Now as Mr. Harrison is fully aware that thirty years ago I reviewed the English version of those parts of the Positive Philosophy which treat of Mathematics, Astronomy and Physics; and as he has referred to the pamphlet in which, ten years later, I quoted a number of passages from the original to signalize my grounds of dissent from Comte's system; I am somewhat surprised by this statement, and by the still more emphatic statement that to me "the writings of Comte are, if not the Absolute Unknowable, at any rate the Absolute Unknown" (p. 125). Doubtless these assertions are effective; but like many effective assertions they do not sufficiently recognize the facts. The remaining statements in this division of Mr. Harrison's argument, I pass over: not because answers equally adequate with those I have thus far given do not exist, but because I cannot give them without entering upon personal questions which I prefer to avoid.

On the closing part of "Agnostic Metaphysics" containing Mr. Harrison's own version of the Religion of Humanity, I have to remark, as I find others remarking, that it amounts, if not to an abandonment of his original

position, still to an entire change of front. Anxious, as he has professed himself, to retain the "magnificent word, Religion" (p. 55) it now appears that when "the Religion of Humanity" is spoken of, the usual connotations of the word are to be in large measure dropped: to give it these connotations is "to foist in theological ideas where none are suggested by us" (p. 131). While, in his first article, one of the objections raised to the "neo-theisms" as well as "the Unknowable," was that there is offered "no relation whatever between worshipper and worshipped" (p. 57) (an objection tacitly implying that Mr. Harrison's religion supplies this relation), it now appears that Humanity is not to be worshipped in any ordinary sense; but that by worship is simply meant "intelligent love and respect for our human brotherhood," and that "in plain words, the religion of Humanity means recognising your duty to your fellow-man on human grounds" (p. 132). Certainly this is much less than what I and others supposed to be included in Mr. Harrison's version of the Religion of Humanity. If he preaches nothing more than an ecstatic philanthropy, few will object; but most will say that his name for it conveyed to them a much wider meaning. Passing over all this, however, I am concerned chiefly to point out another extreme misrepresentation made by Mr. Harrison when discussing my criticism of Comte's assertion that "veneration and gratitude" are due to the Great Being Humanity. After showing why I conceive "veneration and gratitude" are not due to Humanity, I supposed an opponent to exclaim (putting the passage within quotation marks) "But surely 'veneration and gratitude' are due somewhere," since civilized society with all its products "must be credited to some agency or other." [This apostrophe, imagined as coming from a disciple of Comte,

Mr. Harrison, on page 138, actually represents as made in my own person!] To this apostrophe I have replied (p. 93) that "if 'veneration and gratitude' are due at all, they are due to that Ultimate Cause from which Humanity, individually and as a whole, in common with all other things has proceeded." Whereupon Mr. Harrison changes my hypothetical statement into an actual statement. He drops the "*if*," and represents me as positively affirming that "veneration and gratitude" are due somewhere: saying that Mr. Spencer "lavishes his 'veneration and gratitude,' called out by the sum of human civilization, upon his Unknowable and Inconceivable Postulate" (p. 138). I should have thought that even the most ordinary reader, much more Mr. Harrison, would have seen that the argument is entirely an argument *ad hominem*. I deliberately and carefully guarded myself by the "*if*" against the ascription to me of any opinion, one way or the other: being perfectly conscious that much is to be said for and against. The optimist will unhesitatingly affirm that veneration and gratitude are due; while by the pessimist it will be contended that they are not due. One who dwells exclusively on what Emerson calls "the saccharine" principle in things, as illustrated for example in the adaptation of living beings to their conditions—the becoming callous to pains that have to be borne, and the acquirement of liking for labours that are necessary—may think there are good reasons for veneration and gratitude. Contrariwise, these sentiments may be thought inappropriate by one who contemplates the fact that there are some thirty species of parasites which prey upon man, possessing elaborate appliances for maintaining their hold on or within his body, and having enormous degrees of fertility proportionate to the small individual chances their germs have of getting into him and torturing him.

Either view may be supported by masses of evidence; and knowing this I studiously avoided complicating the issue by taking either side. As any one may see who refers back, my sole purpose was that of showing the absurdity of thinking that "veneration and gratitude" are due to the product and not to the producer. Yet Mr. Harrison, having changed my proposition "*if* they are due etc.," into the proposition "they are due etc.," laughs over the contradictions in my views which he deduces, and to which he time after time recurs, commenting on my "astonishing perversity."

In this division of Mr. Harrison's article occur five other cases in which, after his manner, propositions are made to appear untenable or ludicrous; though anyone who refers to them as expressed by me will find them neither the one nor the other. But to show all this would take much trouble to small purpose. Indeed, I must here close the discussion, so far as my own desistence enables me. It is a wearisome and profitless business, this of continually going back on the record, now to show that the ideas ascribed to me are not the ideas I expressed, and now to show that the statements my opponent defends are not the statements he originally made. A controversy always opens side issues. Each new issue becomes the parent of further ones. The original questions become obscured in a swarm of collateral questions; and energies, in my case ill-spared, are wasted to little purpose.

Before closing, however, let me again point out that nothing has been said which calls for change of the views expressed in my first article.

Setting out with the statement that "unlike the ordinary consciousness, the religious consciousness is con-

cerned with that which lies beyond the sphere of sense," I went on to show that the rise of this consciousness begins among primitive men with the belief in a double belonging to each individual, which, capable of wandering away from him during life, becomes his ghost or spirit after death; and that from this idea of a being eventually distinguished as supernatural, there develop, in course of time, the ideas of supernatural beings of all orders up to the highest. Mr. Harrison has alleged that the primitive religion is not belief in, and propitiation of, the ghost, but is worship of "physical objects treated frankly as physical objects" (p. 46). That he has disproved the one view and proved the other, no one will, I think, assert. Contrariwise, he has given occasion for me to cite weighty authorities against him.

Next it was contended that in the assemblage of supernatural beings thus originating in each tribe, some, derived from chiefs, were superior to others; and that, as the compounding and re-compounding of tribes gave origin to societies having social grades and rulers of different orders, there resulted that conception of a hierarchy of ghosts or gods which polytheism shows us. Further it was argued that while, with the growth of civilization and knowledge, the minor supernatural agents became merged in the major supernatural agent, this single great supernatural agent, gradually losing the anthropomorphic attributes at first ascribed, has come in our days to retain but few of them; and, eventually losing these, will then merge into a consciousness of an Omnipresent Power to which no attributes can be ascribed. This proposition has not been contested.

In pursuance of the belief that the religious consciousness naturally arising, and thus gradually transformed, would not disappear wholly, but that "however much

changed it must continue to exist," it was argued that the sentiments which had grown up around the conception of a personal God, though modified when that conception was modified into the conception of a Power which cannot be known or conceived, would not be destroyed. It was held that there would survive, and might even increase, the sentiments of wonder and awe in presence of a Universe of which the origin and nature, meaning and destiny, can neither be known nor imagined; or that, to quote a statement afterwards employed, there must survive those emotions "which are appropriate to the consciousness of a Mystery that cannot be fathomed and a Power that is omnipresent." This proposition has not been disproved; nor, indeed, has any attempt been made to disprove it.

Instead of assaults on these propositions to which alone I am committed, there have been assaults on various propositions gratuitously attached to them; and then the incongruities evolved have been represented as incongruities for which I am responsible.

I end by pointing out as I pointed out before, that "while the things I have said have not been disproved, the things which have been disproved are things I have not said."

# MR. HERBERT SPENCER AND AGNOSTICISM.

*LETTER TO THE "PALL MALL GAZETTE,"*

By FREDERIC HARRISON.

# MR. HERBERT SPENCER AND AGNOSTICISM.[1]

As I do not intend to continue the discussion to which Mr. Herbert Spencer in the "Nineteenth Century" challenges me to return, it may be becoming that I say so in public, and accept his third paper as closing the debate. "Sat prata biberunt." The public has had enough; and if we pursue it further they will think us like the children whose disputes have passed into the stage of "did!" "didn't!" I am well content to leave to Mr. Spencer the last "didn't."[2]

I see he is still multiplying "weighty authorities" to convince me of what I never denied—namely, that in a very early stage of mental development men come to imagine "ghosts" and spirits. What I assert is that there is a phase of mind even earlier; when living and inert qualities, animal and human, are not clearly distinguished.

[1] [Mr. Harrison has thought it desirable, for some reason, to change his audience. He does not address his final statement to the readers of the "Nineteenth Century," who had before them the whole previous controversy, including Mr. Spencer's last article, to which his present letter is chiefly directed; but he brings his case before the readers of the "Pall Mall Gazette," nine tenths of whom, probably, had no knowledge of the discussion, and were therefore incapable of judging of the worth of Mr. Harrison's statements.]

[2] [This letter exhibits a very curious mode of leaving to Mr. Spencer the last "didn't."]

And all Mr. Spencer's new authorities, the nameless "magistrate of Gorackhpur," the Comte Goblet d'Alviella, and the rest, leave me still impenitent.[3] The witness of Jews and Arabs,[4] men in an advanced stage of Theism, is obviously irrelevant; and the Comte d'Alviella, who has also sent me his little work, "Harrison contre Spencer," repudiates the "ghost" theory, and says that, with Réville, he believes that "religion began with the worship of natural objects."[5] The Comte Goblet is a very Balaam, the son of Peor. Does any man in his senses really deny that in the extreme infancy of the mind there is a point when the conception of "ghosts" has not emerged? Does a baby believe in ghosts? Do animals? All the anonymous collectors, from Gorackhpur to Boggley Wollah, will never persuade me of this. As I write my tabby kitten is playing with a ball, which she evidently takes to be alive.[6] Does the kitten fancy there is the "ghost" of a mouse inside the ball? Of course not: she thinks the ball itself is a kind of mouse, or has

[3] [What Mr. Spencer asserts is that there is no such lower phase of mind as that which Mr. Harrison alleges. Mr. Harrison refers to the evidence of the Magistrate of Gorackhpur as though Mr. Spencer had given that evidence in his article; yet it is evidence that is simply named as existing but is *not* given; while to the important evidence that *is* given Mr. Harrison pays no attention.]

[4] [He refers to the Jews and Arabs as if these were the only races named, whereas there are mentioned various of those lower races that are especially in question. Jews and Arabs are obviously referred to by Mr. Spencer merely for the purpose of showing the universality of the conception.]

[5] [It will be seen, by referring to Count D'Alviella's paper in the Appendix, that his repudiation of the ghost-theory is a qualified one. He was plainly quoted by Mr. Spencer, not as an authority upon the lower races which he has not especially studied in relation to this question, but simply as giving a series of authorities against Mr. Harrison concerning the religion of the Chinese.]

[6] [Any reader interested in this point as to whether the kitten takes the ball to be alive, who will refer to the chapter in Spencer's "Principles of Sociology" on "The Ideas of the Animate and Inanimate," will find conclusive proof that even low animals distinguish the living from the not-living by the test of spontaneous movement.]

mousy ways. There we have Fetishism preceding Spiritualism.

I have certainly cast no insinuations whatever on the three conscientious gentlemen who carried out Mr. Spencer's directions to tabulate "all classes of facts." But it is too much to ask me to believe either that they knew nothing of Mr. Spencer's theories, or that they did not tabulate such facts as they judged would be most useful to him.[7] One would as easily believe that, when Mr. Gladstone's secretary is directed to tabulate electoral facts, he has not the least idea whether the Premier is about to use them in favour of reform or against it. And then, would not the philosopher's three "ghosts" (as they said in the Belt trial) naturally incline to the "ghost" origin of all things?

On one point I certainly did misunderstand Mr. Spencer, and that in all good faith. When he said, "if veneration and gratitude are due at all," I confess that I took him to admit that they are due. He now says that is not his meaning. Be it so. But if his view of religion is, that veneration and gratitude have no part in it, that it has no object, and is "altogether unconcerned" with devotion, hope, worship, and consolation, the pertinent question occurs—Why all these chapters and articles about religion at all?[8] In Mr. Spencer's philosophy, one would

[7] [But is not the "suspicion" which Mr. Harrison continues to think so well justified very much stronger against the facts which any author collects for himself? The objection would stop investigation, as it would simply lead to the rejection of all the evidence which every writer assigns on behalf of his doctrine because forsooth he is interested to choose that which will prove it. Surely, if there is any choice in the matter, it will be that facts collected by others, with instructions not to collect facts of one class rather than another, are less open to the charge of bias than facts otherwise collected.]

[8] [Mr. Harrison seems to the end to be strangely oblivious to the purpose of Mr. Spencer's article, which he opened the present controversy by attacking. That purpose was to show what part of the religious sentiments would survive perennially. To what extent these remaining sentiments may

think, the chapter on religion is like the famous chapter on the snakes in Iceland, or the connection between the Old and the New Testament, which, we used to be told, was a blank page.

Mr. Spencer and other critics of mine are now concerned to find that I am "changing my front"[9]—am not an orthodox Positivist, in fact. My "orthodoxy" is surely my own concern, not theirs. As I have never at any time pretended to regard the writings of Comte as canonical, or surrendered my own duty to use them intelligently, I do not know what "orthodoxy" in the matter can mean. As to "change of front," it is nonsense. If people now find that I do not adopt views that were attributed to me, the reason is, not that I have changed my views, but that opinions were attributed to me without any good ground. One lively person, Mr. W. Ward, I think, quoted some words which I used in 1880, and contrasted them with the very different language, he said, that I used in September last at Newton Hall. It so happens that in September last I did repeat the very same words which I used in 1880, and which Mr. Ward now tells me I had recanted. They happen to come from a form of address which I have repeated scores of times at Newton Hall ever since it was opened. This is conclusive, I think, that my language has never varied. But I cannot discuss with those who will not take the trouble to inform themselves of simple facts, and who tell the world that on a particular occasion

rightly be called religious, and how far they may occupy the sphere of religion, are questions instructively dealt with by Count D'Alviella's article appended to the present volume.]

[9] [And why not? Surely if Mr. Harrison reproaches an antagonist with not having that which he regards as a worship, and offers his own Positivist faith as affording a worship, and if he then, when pressed, abandons the worship and reduces his religion to an ecstatic philanthropy, it is competent for his antagonist to point out that he has changed front.]

I repudiated language which I did there and then publicly use.[10]

Mr. Spencer is surprised that I should say he does not know Comte's writings.[11] I will give my reasons. Comte's writings consist of eight principal works, dating from 1830–1856. Of these, I have reason to believe, Mr. Spencer has read through none except the first, completed in 1842, and that in an abridged translation. In 1864, many years after Comte's death, and twelve years after Comte had finally settled his classification of the sciences, Mr. Spencer wrote a work on "The Classification of the Sciences, and Reasons for Dissenting from the Philosophy of M. Comte." Throughout this work Mr. Spencer speaks of Comte as making "six sciences." Now, in all Comte's works, except the first, he makes seven sciences. The seven sciences are the A B C of Positivism;[12] in Newton Hall, or any other Positivist school, tables of the seven sciences may be seen; and they occur in tens of thousands of Positivist publications, English and French. Yet for twenty years Mr. Spencer has gone on reprinting his "Reasons for Dissenting from the Philosophy of M. Comte," without an inkling of the fact that for thirty-two

[10] [But that is beside the point. The question is not whether Mr. Harrison has varied his language as used at Newton Hall, but whether his language, as used in his article "A Ghost of Religion," is or is not widely different from his language as used in his article on "Agnostic Metaphysics."]

[11] [Mr. Harrison said that Comte was to Mr. Spencer "The Absolute Unknown." He defends this statement by pointing out that Mr. Spencer's knowledge of Comte is but partial!]

[12] [It is certainly curious that the "A B C of Positivism" should not be given in the abridged translation of the "Positive Philosophy" made by Miss Martineau, where six sciences only are enumerated. That translation was made in 1854, from the then current edition of the "Positive Philosophy," with Comte's assent, and was spoken of by him with high approval. This insistence on seven sciences instead of six was not, therefore, very pronounced in 1854. But Mr. Harrison appears to think that having rejected the Comtean classification of the sciences along with the Positive Philosophy, in 1864, Mr. Spencer was bound to keep himself *au courant* with any changes which might subsequently be made by M. Comte.]

years Comte's works speak of seven, not six, sciences as the foundation of his philosophy. Mr. Spencer reprints the work last October, still with the same blunder.[13] It is as if a writer on the British Constitution persisted in talking about the four estates of the Realm, or as if a man should dissent from the Church of England on the ground of her having forty-nine Articles of Religion.

To the reprint of the "Reasons," &c., published last October, Mr. Spencer has added an appendix, wherein he sets forth, in sixteen propositions, the cardinal principles of his Synthetic Philosophy,[14] and he challenges us to say whether they are drawn from Comte. I will satisfy him amply. So far as I know, they are none of them drawn from Comte. Nay, as I understand it, no rational Positivist would accept them at all in the absolute, objective form in which they are put. The sixteen theses, which Mr. Spencer has nailed on the door of the Temple of the Unknowable, claim to be an explanation of the Universe.[15]

[13] [The "Reasons for dissenting from the Philosophy of M. Comte," recently reprinted in England, are from the original stereotype plates used in the United States as in England in 1864; and the quotation from the "Positive Philosophy" in it, in which six sciences are referred to, is one in which the number of the sciences is absolutely irrelevant to the issue. But why is Mr. Harrison so anxious that Mr. Spencer should have pointed out the "blunder" (to use his polite word) of M. Comte, in saying at first that there were only six sciences, when he afterward found out that there were seven?]

[14] [See Appendix, "Synopsis of the Cardinal Principles of the Synthetic Philosophy."]

[15] [Mr. Harrison professes to have read, and to have accepted in large measure, Mr. Spencer's Philosophy; but he seems, here, to have profoundly misapprehended its aim. The "Synthetic Philosophy" no more professes to *explain* the Universe than does the "Positive Philosophy." One of the points on which Mr. Spencer is at one with M. Comte, as M. Comte is at one with numerous earlier philosophers, is in holding that phenomena only can be known, and that Noumena remain forever unknown. Mr. Spencer's purpose has been that of establishing the most general laws of the *order* among phenomena in Space and Time, and to explain the less general truths concerning this order in terms of the most general truths. What it is which is manifested, and how in that which is manifested there inheres that Noumenal order which underlies the phenomenal order, the "Synthetic Philosophy" regards as inexplicable. Indeed, the very thesis of Agnosticism, as shown at the close of the first of the foregoing articles, is that so

They open, like the Book of Genesis, with the words: "Throughout the Universe in general and in detail, there is, &c., &c. . . .;" and then they assert that Evolution, Heterogeneity, Integration, Differentiation, Instability, Segregation, Equilibration, Dissolution, Persistence, the Unknowable, and so forth, account for the Universe as a whole and all its details, organic and inorganic, physical, social, and mental. Now Positivism looks on all explanations of the Universe as unphilosophical. Comte attempted to methodize our knowledge and our inquiries. If Mr. Spencer had done nothing but give us an explanation of the Universe I should not be his constant reader, or count him in the first rank of living philosophers. I care little for the sixteen theses, which are too absolute and pan-Cosmogonical for me. They sound to me like the first verse of the Pentateuch or the Fourth Gospel. Milton preferred the "Paradise Regained" to the "Paradise Lost," and the great Frederic valued himself on his sonnets and his flute. If the Synthetic philosophy were really reduced to Segregation and the fifteen other dogmas, two worlds would not combine to honour the name of Herbert Spencer. It is held in such high honour, because they find in his works a really unequalled grasp in the co-ordination of ideas, a positive method which rarely stumbles, a vast fertility of illustration, and a supreme gift for perceiving the harmonies between nature and society. Like the alchemists and realists of old, Mr. Spencer has done a great work when he was seeking something

entirely beyond us is the nature of the Universe that even the word explanation (a word derived from our purely relative ideas) is probably inapplicable to that which lies beyond the sphere of our intelligence.

But while this closing passage of Mr. Harrison's letter shows how completely he misapprehends the scope of the "Synthetic Philosophy," it puts beyond any further question the fact that the ideas which in their elaborated forms constitute the "Synthetic Philosophy" are entirely alien to the ideas of M. Comte.]

else. He has not explained the Universe, but he has given this age a mass of philosophic suggestion, which we, professed followers of Auguste Come, most heartily and respectfully welcome, and the analogies of which with Positivism we are the first to acknowledge.

# APPENDIX.

HARRISON AGAINST SPENCER.

# THE RELIGIOUS VALUE OF THE UNKNOWABLE.

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By the COUNT GOBLET D'ALVIELLA,

PROFESSOR OF THE HISTORY OF RELIGIONS IN THE UNIVERSITY OF BRUSSELS.

# THE RELIGIOUS VALUE OF THE UNKNOWABLE.

UNDER the title of "Religion; a Prospect and Retrospect," Mr. Herbert Spencer published at the beginning of this year, in the English review "The Nineteenth Century," the chapter which is intended to serve as the conclusion of the sixth volume of his "Principles of Sociology." The article does but little more than develop opinions already outlined in the course of the previous volumes, notably in the "First Principles." It nevertheless made a sensation, both by the bearing of the subject, and on account of the interest that attaches to all the labors of the author. As soon as it appeared it was reproduced in French by the "Revue Philosophique," and in Italian by the "Revista di Filosofia Scientifica." It provoked numerous polemics in the English philosophical and literary reviews; and several writers in the same magazine in which it appeared have answered it from a variety of points of view. Among these last is Mr. Frederic Harrison, the principal representative of orthodox Positivism in England. Although his article has not obtained an equal currency with that of Mr. Spencer, we have thought it would not be without interest to oppose the one to the other, in order to compare them, so far as they relate to the historic evolution of the religious senti-

ment. By so doing we may obtain, as expounded in a few pages by the best authorized interpreters of the two schools, the views, more or less debatable, but assuredly quite original, of thinkers, who, while using positive methods, and differing in opinion upon the nature and the office of religion, yet profess equal confidence in the future of the religious sentiment. Their antagonism will even add to the attraction and utility of the comparison.

Mr. Spencer begins by establishing that, in order to explain the "Genesis of Religion," it is necessary to seek for the primitive form of the religious sentiment, and he believes that he finds that form in animism. We need not reproduce his reasoning on this point, after the excellent summary M. Albert Réville made of it two years ago. We will only state that Mr. Spencer fixes the origin of the religious sentiment in the belief in doubles and ghosts, which was engendered in primitive man by the apparitions of dreams. Spirits are at first simply beings endowed with a physical and moral organization analogous to man's, save that they possess extraordinary faculties. Gradually they become dematerialized and multiplied infinitely, are lodged in all nature, in which they become the authors of phenomena, and are at length divided into inferior spirits and superior spirits, or gods. Even these gods are at first only magnified men, having the wants, appetites, and passions of the human species. But, with the progress of ideas and sentiments, they become deanthropomorphized, retain only the higher qualities of man, and are finally merged into a single Being, more or less abstract.

What is to come of these facts in the future? "On the one hand," says Mr. Spencer, "it is irrational to suppose that the changes which have brought the religious consciousness to its present form will suddenly cease. On

the other hand, it is irrational to suppose that the religious consciousness, naturally generated as we have seen, will disappear and leave an unfilled gap." The author of the "Principles of Sociology" here recalls the grand principle, or rather the supreme law, on which he pivots his whole system of the universe, that of the rhythm of evolution and of dissolution, the two processes simultaneously at work in all Nature. Evolution is interpreted by an increase of co-ordination and heterogeneity; in religion it has led to the multiplication, classification, and hierarchy of spirits, with the conception of a supreme and only power as the culmination of the whole. Dissolution is manifested by the progressive diminution of the part assigned to the supernatural in the explanation of phenomena, by the disappearance of spirits and secondary gods, and finally by the suppression of the inferior attributes predicated of the Supreme Being.

Mr. Spencer believes that this double action will not stop here. Not only will it lead us to cease seeking in the Divinity for sentiments which are connected with the limitations of human nature, such as regret, repentance, anger, etc., but it will end with establishing the incompatibility of all feeling, all consciousness, and all will, with the very conception of the Supreme Being; and that will amount to taking away from it qualities still regarded by Deists as his most essential attributes, namely, omniscience, goodness, and personality.* "This conception

* Indeed, according to the Associationist school, of which Mr. Spencer, like nearly all contemporary English psychologists, is one, no sentient being can be immutable and omniscient, because the production of all feeling requires a succession of states of consciousness. So every volition presupposes a motive, and vanishes with the realization of its object. Lastly, intelligence implies independent and external activities; it can act only under the excitation of impressions engendered by external agents. It is proper to remark, also, that another representative of the same school, Mr.

which has been enlarging from the beginning, must go on enlarging, until, by disappearance of its limits, it becomes a consciousness which transcends the forms of distinct thought, though it forever remains a consciousness."

It is proper to recollect that, in his "First Principles," Mr. Spencer affirmed the logical necessity as well as the validity of the belief in the positive existence of the Absolute. Whether we analyze the operations of the mind, or reduce to one the phenomena of Nature, he maintains that in the end we shall arrive at an unconditioned Reality, Unknowable from the start, except in its manifestations. In the course of the article with which we are occupied, he returns to this theme to establish that the affirmation of the Unknowable will be the last word of religion (or, as it would be better to say, of theology), as it is already the last word of science. But here we ask ourselves, how can an absolute verity be obtained by the modification of conceptions absolutely false from the beginning? Because, replies the author, superstitions, even the most primitive ones, contain this germ of truth, "namely, that the power which manifests itself in consciousness is but a differently conditioned form of the power which manifests itself beyond consciousness." Primitive man feels in himself a source of energy. In every impulsion which he impresses upon his limbs or on external objects, he has a feeling of effort, and consequently he attributes all the changes of which he is not the author to analogous efforts. In other terms, he attributes the latter changes to beings like him, or to other living beings, or to mysterious creatures the notion of which he derives from the idea of the double.

Gradually, these doubles or spirits cease to be a copy

John Stuart Mill, admits the possibility of conceiving of the Divine Mind as the succession of divine thoughts prolonged through all eternity.

of man, and the notion of force is no longer identified with the nature of the human will. This rupture or "disassociation" reaches its extreme with the scientific man who attributes to forces all physical changes, even up to the undulations of the ethereal medium. But the man of science himself can not conceive these forces except by relating them to that internal energy of which he has consciousness by muscular effort, and he is always constrained to symbolize objective force in terms expressing subjective force. Thus we arrive at the double conclusion, "that force, as it exists beyond consciousness, can not be like what we know as force within consciousness; and that yet, as either is capable of generating the other, they must be different modes of the same." Whence we may conclude that the final term of the philosophical speculation begun by the primitive man is the assertion that "the Power manifested throughout the Universe distinguished as material is the same power which in ourselves wells up under the form of consciousness." Mr. Spencer adds: "Those who think that science is dissipating religious beliefs and sentiments seem unaware that whatever of mystery is taken from the old interpretation is added to the new, or rather, we may say, that the transference from one to the other is accompanied by increase; since, for an explanation which has a seeming feasibility, science substitutes an explanation which, carrying us back only a certain distance, then leaves us in the presence of the avowedly inexplicable." He then explains how the result of the progress of science has been to transfigure Nature: "Where ordinary perception saw perfect simplicity, it reveals great complexity; where there seemed absolute inertness, it discloses intense activity; and in what appears mere vacancy, it finds a marvelous play of forces." This transfiguration is aided by the conclusions

from all our psychological studies. In fact, the necessity of thinking of external phenomena and forces in terms conceived in our consciousness, simple symbols of the inaccessible reality, gives to the Universe "rather a spiritualistic than a materialistic aspect"—certainly, on the condition of admitting that the phenomenal manifestations of the ultimate energy can in no wise show us what it is.

At the same time that analytic science, instead of destroying, thus magnifies and transfigures the object of religion, concrete science enlarges the sphere of the religious sentiment. "From the very beginning the progress of knowledge has been accompanied by an increasing capacity for wonder." This assertion may be easily verified by comparing, with reference to it, not only savages and civilized men, but also individuals of the same society in different degrees of instruction. The faculty in question can be developed only in the measure that our conceptions rise and our views become deeper. The more the mind penetrates into the complexity of phenomena, the more it acquires the gift of seizing it as a whole, in the same manner that the ear requires a long cultivation to become sensible to the complex harmonies of a symphony. It may be that some time the course of things, now comprehensible only in its successive parts, will be conceived in its totality in such a manner as to awaken sentiments as superior to those of the civilized man as his sentiments are to those of savages. "And these feelings are not likely to be decreased, but to be increased by that analysis of knowledge which, while forcing him to agnosticism, yet continually prompts him to imagine some solution of the Great Enigma which he knows can not be solved. Especially must this be so when he remembers that the very notions, beginning and end, cause and purpose, are relative notions belonging to human thought which are

probably irrelevant to the Ultimate Reality transcending human thought; and when, though suspecting that explanation is a word without meaning when applied to this Ultimate Reality, he yet feels compelled to think there must be an explanation. But, amid the mysteries which become more mysterious the more they are thought about, there will remain the one absolute certainty, that he is ever in the presence of an Infinite and Eternal Energy from which all things proceed."

The formula by which the doctrine of Evolution thus gives us its last word is not of yesterday in philosophy. It is simply Pantheism—or, if we wish to exclude, even in words derived from the Greek, all mention of God—Monism. The original thing with Mr. Spencer is that he has furnished to this conception of the Supreme Unity, which till now rested on pure speculation, a basis in some way scientific and positive. But he has been able to reach this result only by making, as we have seen, constant use of the psychological method. So he was obliged to join battle with the doctrinal positivism that holds psychology in poor esteem, and which disputes the right of the human mind to adventure beyond the phenomenal world.

The disciples of Auguste Comte were destined to clash with this attempt at reconstruction, precisely because they too assume to seat a religious system upon the positive conception of the world; and Mr. Harrison, who has more than once already broken lances with the principal champions of evolutionism, could not let this new occasion pass of assailing, in their conclusion, the theories of Mr. Spencer.

In his reply—the title of which, "The Ghost of Religion," sufficiently indicates its spirit—Mr. Harrison ren-

ders homage to the critical and negative part of the thesis sustained by his adversary, so far as it puts in trial the rash affirmations of current metaphysics and theology, but refuses to follow him in his efforts to transform the God of the old religions into the Unknowable of the Agnostics. He maintains that notwithstanding the capital E, the infinite and eternal Energy, from which all things proceed, has no analogy with God, except by its negative attributes. In fact, when we take away the goodness, the wisdom, the justice, the consciousness, the will, the life—all that remains is "a sort of something about which we can know nothing." Then, why AN Energy, and not several? To affirm that it is unique is to assume that we possess concerning the Unknowable some very important information; that is, that it is homogeneous and identical in the entire universe. Finally, the affirmation that it is the source of all things is "an equivocal reversion to the theologic type." All that is necessary to admit is the practical belief that man is in presence of one or more energies of which he knows nothing, and to which, consequently, it would be wiser to assign no limits, nor conditions, nor functions. If that is all that Mr. Spencer means, it would be better to adhere to his term, the Unknowable. It would also be more philosophical to say the Unknown, and to write the word without the capital letter.

The great error consists in seeking the essence of religion in what constitutes a secondary and transient element of it. The end of religion is not to answer a question of ontology, but to make men better.

The historical evolution of the religious sentiment in no way justifies the conclusion which the "recognized chief of the evolutionist philosophy" draws from it. It is quite admissible that the illusion of the double may

have engendered belief in spirits. But this belief in no wise represents the first form of religion. During countless ages, millions of men at first knew only the religious form named fetichism by Auguste Comte; that is, "the belief and worship, not of spirits of any kind, not of any material, imagined being *inside* of things, but of the actual visible things themselves—trees, stones, rivers, mountains, earth, fire, stars, sun, and sky." Thus, during a long sequence of ages, religion was the worship of Nature regarded in its influences on man; and, if we can judge of the future by the past, it will be, in the cycle of future ages, the worship of Humanity as supported by Nature. These two worships have the same basis: man's belief in a Power that controls his life, and a feeling of gratitude toward that Power. The reign of theology will have been only an interregnum.

Every serious religion includes three elements—belief, worship, and rules of conduct. What, then, must we think of a religion that leaves the human heart in the condition in which it found it; which offers no hold to devotion or faith; which can have no creed, nor doctrines, nor priests, nor teachers, nor rites, nor morals, nor æsthetics, nor hopes, nor consolations; and which is summed up in the single dogma, "The Unknown is everywhere, and Evolution is its Prophet"?

The universal presence of an unknowable or unknown substratum is only a generalization. Call it the first axiom of science, a law of the human mind, or the universal postulate of philosophy; so be it. But seek in it nothing of that which engenders a religion. Doubtless this substratum is concordant in some points with the ordinary object of worship. It excites our faculty of wonder; it suggests the idea of a vague and indefinite extension; it offers the triple character of ubiquity, mys-

tery, and immensity. But, if it possesses these attributes in common with God, it equally shares them with force, gravitation, atoms, vibration, time, and space. Now, who has ever thought of a religion of gravitation, or of atoms? Who, except perhaps a Kantian in delirium, has ever made his God of Space and Time?

On the other hand, this Unknown lacks everything that should be necessary for it to become the object of a religion. Wonder and mystery doubtless have a place in religion, but it is a subordinate one. "The roots and fibers of religion are to be found in love, awe, sympathy, gratitude, consciousness of inferiority and of dependence, community of will, acceptance of control, manifestation of purpose, reverence for majesty, goodness, creative energy, and life."

The most elementary religion has always established bonds of sympathy between the adorers and the object of their veneration. On the side of the latter, it has always supposed the exercise of a positive influence; on the side of the former, a feeling of gratitude for that exercise, as well as the desire to regulate their conduct in consequence of it. Now, what intervention can we expect from the Unknowable? It would be as allowable to adore the equator, or the meridian, which render services to geographers and sailors.

It is vain to say that the Unknowable has a real existence. As we can not know anything of it, it is practically the same as if it did not exist. "Does the Evolutionist commune with the Unknowable in the secret silence of his chamber? Does he meditate on it, saying, In quietness and confidence shall be your strength? One would like to see the new *Imitatio Ignoti.*"

We may build altars to an unknown God, whom we conceive as a real being, knowing us, although we do not

know him. But what altar can we raise, even metaphorically, to an Unknowable whom we have not the least reason to represent as knowing us, or as influencing us in any relation? Mr. Harrison here causes to march past us the child, eager to know and love; the mother and the wife struck in their dearest affections; the weak and oppressed, poor and suffering, all who are looking for a guide and moral support, and all who are thirsting to hope and believe; he shows us this company, bewildered and wandering, running up to the Evolutionist and crying to him: "Man of science, you have driven away our priests, and silenced our old masters. What new faith have you to give us?" And the philosopher replying, with bleeding heart, "Think of the Unknowable." Since the Unknowable is as powerless as the precession of the equinoxes to group men into a community of beliefs, of sentiments, and of objects, it can have neither congregations of worshipers, nor temples dedicated to it, nor images or symbols for its mysteries. If, however, there exists a symbol of the Unknowable, it is the algebraic formula of the unknown raised to its highest power ($x^x$). Shall we ever see the worshipers of the Unknowable meeting to pray to it, "O $x^x$, love us, help us, make us one with thee?"

Finally, what is the mission of religion, if not to model the mind of men in order to react upon their conduct? "The hallowed name of religion has meant, in a thousand languages, man's deepest convictions, his surest hopes, the most sacred yearnings of his heart, that which can bind in brotherhood generations of men, comfort the fatherless and the widow, uphold the martyr at the stake, and the hero in his long battle. Why retain this magnificent word, rich with the associations of all that is great, pure, and lovely in human nature, if it is to be henceforth limited to an idea . . . which by the hypothesis can have

nothing to do with either knowledge, belief, hope, life, duty, or happiness?"

In reality Agnosticism—an unfortunate word in the matter of religion, for like the term Protestantism it implies only an idea of difference and negation—represents the last stage of the decomposition which has gradually undermined the old ontological conception of the religious sentiment. That conception, we might say, is reduced to absurdity by a process which, wishing to maintain religion in the domain of the Unknowable, condemns it to become an incomprehensible minimum.

But religion in itself is not threatened; it is only restored to its true sphere; the known, the real, the kingdom of law, the empire of man. It will have, renouncing the pretension of explaining the Universe to us, to become again, not merely anthropomorphic, as all the important religions have been, but frankly *anthropic*. "Humanity is the grandest object of reverence within the region of the real and the known, Humanity with the world on which it rests as its base and environment. . . . The way for us is the clearer as we find the religion of Spiritism, in its long and restless evolution of thirty centuries, ending in the legitimate deduction, the religion of the Unknowable, a paradox as memorable as any in the history of the human mind. The alternative is very plain. Shall we cling to a religion of Spiritism when Philosophy is whittling away spirit to Nothing? Or shall we accept a religion of Realism, where all the great traditions and functions of religion are retained unbroken?"

We have not to take part here for or against the philosophy of Evolution. The only points we wish to examine in the controversy are, first, if the historical

development of the religious sentiment can be summed up into a gradual reduction of the divine attributes, into a simplification, or to borrow Mr. Spencer's barbarous term, a deanthropomorphization of the divinity; next, if the theory of the Unknowable has all the elements necessary to beget a religion; and, lastly, if the religious sentiment is tending to divest itself of every moral element or whether it is destined, as the Comtists maintain, to confound itself with altruism or devotion to humanity.

Mr. Harrison sharply criticises the theory that ascribes the origin of religion to *doubles* appearing in dreams. We are not fanatics in regard to this hypothesis, but would prefer to admit, with M. A. Réville, that religion began with the worship of natural objects or cosmic phenomena personified, animated, *anthropomorphized* by the imagination of the primitive man. But these reserves involve no impeachment of Mr. Spencer's general reasoning, so far as concerns either the spiritual nature of the first notion that man formed of the divine, or the work of simplification and purification which that notion has constantly undergone in the course of ages. The thesis of Mr. Harrison, on the contrary—that man began with the adoration of natural objects frankly regarded as such —appears to us absolutely contrary to reason and observation. He cites, for example, the ancient religion of China, which was based entirely on veneration of the earth, the sky, and ancestors, considered objectively and not as the residence of immaterial beings. This is to play at hazard, for, without insisting on what ancestors "considered objectively" may be, it has been found precisely that the religion of the ancient Chinese Empire is the most perfect type of organized animism, and that it regarded even the material objects out of which it made

its gods as the inseparable manifestation, the envelope, or even the body of invisible spirits.*

How shall we explain it that after the works of Tylor, Spencer, Max Müller, Réville, and Tiele, a thinker as intelligent and well-informed as Mr. Harrison can still pause at a thesis long ago passed by by science? It is, we believe, a remarkable instance of the influence which Auguste Comte still exerts over his orthodox disciples, and which can only be compared with that of Aristotle over the scholastics of the middle ages. We know that Comte borrowed from President De Brosses the hypothesis of primitive fetichism, and that he introduced it in the series of three states (fetichism, polytheism, and monotheism), through which religion in his view had invariably to pass.

We think, then, that Mr. Spencer is right in representing the evolution of the idea of God as tending to render the object of worship less and less sensible to man, more and more incapable of falling under our senses. But this process of abstraction must stop somewhere, else even the existence of God will at length become its victim, and that would evidently go beyond the Spencerian doctrine. The whole problem consists, then, in knowing where this stopping-place is to be found; and, according as we start from spiritual theism, from pantheism or from agnosticism, we shall be able to reach a different solution without really departing from the line of religious development.

Mr. Spencer, on his side, estimates that the end will be reached when the idea of God has been divested of all

* See, notably, Tiele, "Manuel de l'Histoire des Religions," translated by M. Maurice Vernes, Book II; and in the "Revue de l'Histoire des Religions," the "Religion de l'Ancien Empire Chinois," by M. Julius Happel (Vol. IV, No. 6).

limitation and of every condition. There will then remain for us the one absolute certainty, that man "is ever in the presence of an Infinite and Eternal Energy, from which all things proceed."

Is there nothing here but a pure negation, as Mr. Harrison asserts? The terms of the formula themselves prove that the question is of what may be supposed to be the most positive thing in the world—the stuff of which the Universe is made. Mr. Spencer speaks repeatedly of the Unknowable as the power that manifests itself at the same time in the Universe and in the Consciousness, as the Supreme Reality which is concealed behind the changing course of phenomena. He attributes to it, as Mr. Harrison recognizes, unity, homogeneity, immanence, unlimited persistence in time and space. He assigns it, for modes of action, the laws of the Universe; he sets it face to face with phenomena, both internal and external, in the relation of substance to manifestation, if not of cause to effect. Still more, the Comtist critic himself admits that we may accept with full confidence all that the evolutionist philosophy affirms and contests with reference to the permanent indications of an ultimate energy. Now, is not this concession of Mr. Harrison's the complete refutation of his thesis relative to the negative nature of the Unknowable?

He adds, indeed, that an existence of which we can know nothing remains, in the religious point of view, as if it did not exist. To this objection it may be replied that he consents himself to admit mystery as an element of the religious sentiment. We will only add to this, with Mr. Spencer, that it is an essential element of it, and in this respect the Unknowable is susceptible of satisfying the most difficult imaginations, for it is the mystery of mysteries, and something that we may be sure will

never be cleared up in this world, whatever may be the progress of science. Mr. Harrison commits an error—especially strange with a positivist—when he reproaches evolutionism for using the term Unknowable instead of Unknown. The Unknown includes a knowable part, the sum of the phenomena and laws which still escape our perception, but which we may be able to know and doubtless will know more and more. The Unknowable, on the other hand, represents what will always escape our knowledge by virtue of our intellectual organization itself—the first cause, the Noumenon, the essence of things—unless Mr. Harrison, urging the doctrine of positivism to an extreme, prohibits us from mentioning all that transcends phenomena and their relations, even in order to declare it Unknowable! As M. Littré admits: "Immensity, material as well as intellectual, appears under its double character of reality and inaccessibility. It is an ocean that beats against our shore, and for which we have neither bark nor sail, but the clear vision of which is as salutary as formidable!"

A second element, which every one agrees in declaring characteristic of religion, is that feeling, of a complex nature, which is interpreted, according to circumstances, into wonder or fear, enthusiasm or stupor, before the object of religious contemplation. Is not this one of the impressions most easily engendered by the discovery of that mysterious energy that rises, at the end of all our investigations, in all the avenues of knowledge, as if by the conception of that substantial stratum which remains when all else changes and passes away—primordial foundation of Nature and consciousness, without which, if we could only suppose it absent for a second, the whole Universe would resolve itself into chaos or into nothing?

Schleiermacher referred the essence of religion to a

feeling of dependence. Does not Evolution teach that the force of which we are conscious whenever we produce a change by our own effort is correlative to the power that transcends consciousness, and can we imagine a closer dependence than this relation of the individual with the ultimate Energy of which it is, like all of Nature, a transient production? It is of a power conceived in this manner that we may well say, *In illo vivimus, movemur, et sumus* (in it we live, and move, and are).

The conditions indispensable to becoming the object of a religion are thus found in the Unknowable, as well as in the Eternal, the Absolute, the Self-Existent, the Most High, the Only Pure, or whatever other qualifications men may have made the equivalent of the divine. The last word of Evolution agrees with the definitions of the most refined theologists, which, transcending vulgar symbolism, have constantly recognized God in the double character of reality and incomprehensibility. We may add that, before becoming the scientific faith of Spencer, Huxley, and even of Haeckel, this religious conception has sufficed for men of the highest mind and the most pious imagination, such as Giordano Bruno, Spinoza, Kant, Goethe, Shelley, Wordsworth, Carlyle, Emerson, and even M. Rénan. It can lead not to religion only but even to mysticism, however little, like some Neoplatonists and certain Hindoo philosophers, one may become absorbed in the conception of the supreme unity.*

* We cite, for example, the following passage from an address made by the great mystic of the Bramo Somaj, Keshub Chunder Sen, at a time when no one accused him of having transgressed the most strict rationalism: "(For the true Yogui) forms become informal, the informal takes form. Mind discovers itself in matter, matter transforms itself into mind. In the glorious sun is revealed the glory of glories. In the serene moon mind imbibes of all serenities. In the reverberation of the thunder is the Voice of the Lord which makes itself heard afar. All things are full of Him.

Under this relation, the danger is not that it will remain without influence, but that it will communicate to its adepts a kind of vertigo more formidable than the fascination of the abyss, either by the contrast of its incommensurable grandeur with the insignificance of our being, or by the opposition of its immutable Unity with the unlimited Variety and perpetual expansion of the material Universe. These sentiments, as Mr. Spencer remarks, can only increase in frequency as well as in intensity as the human mind becomes more capable in seizing the comprehensiveness of things and their complex relations.

Certainly, it is no longer possible to attribute to that Supreme Reality goodness, consciousness, and personality, *as we conceive them.* But do our conceptions exhaust the modes of the infinite? Mr. Harrison will see only the negative sides of the Unknowable. Whether you employ, he tells us, the term existence or energy, you never have anything but a scientific generalization, a dumb, blind, insensible entity, without common attributes, and consequently without possible sympathy with man. Mr. Spencer meets the objection in advance in his "First Principles." "Those who espouse this alternative position," he says, "make the erroneous assumption that the choice is between personality and something

Open your eyes, behold he is without; shut them, he is found within. Then your asceticism (*yoga*), O disciple, will be complete; aspire constantly to this plenitude." There is not a word in these exalted conceptions in contradiction with the religious conceptions of Mr. Spencer. Haeckel himself has said in his "Morphology": "The philosophy which sees the mind and force of God acting in all the phenomena of Nature is alone worthy of the grandeur of the Being who embraces all. . . . In him we live, and act, and are. The philosophy of nature becomes theology." All depends on the mental angle under which the disciple of Spencer contemplates Nature, or the manifestations of the Unknowable.

lower than personality; whereas the choice is rather between personality and something higher. Is it not just possible there is a mode of being as much transcending Intelligence and Will as these transcend mechanical motion? It is true that we are totally unable to conceive any such higher mode of being. But this is not a reason for questioning its existence; it is rather the reverse. Have we not seen how utterly incompetent our minds are to form even an approach to a conception of that which underlies all phenomena? Is it not proved that this incompetency is the incompetency of the Conditioned to grasp the Unconditioned? Does it not follow that the Ultimate Cause can not in any respect be conceived by us because it is in every respect greater than can be conceived?"

Energy is a word that has a bad sound to many ears. We apprehend in it the idea of brute, of material force. Here, again, Mr. Spencer is able to tell us that we let ourselves be carried away by the analogy of muscular effort. But all the languages of civilized peoples permit us to rise above this literal acceptation, and to interpret the term in a larger sense, as implying mental and moral activities. If the Universe, with its laws and harmonies, if man with his capacities and aspirations, proceed from the same Energy, it must be that that Energy contains in puissance whatever in our eyes goes to constitute the grandeur of Nature and the glory of the human mind. Further, as it should likewise include the germ of all its future, or even possible developments, it must necessarily represent a cause superior to all its known effects—that is, to the finest and highest manifestations of that which we regard as the rational order of things.

Mr. Harrison finally declares that the Unknowable can never have temples, rites, or ministers. We will not

inquire here to what point these are indispensable elements of religion. The ascetic school of India, a fruit of the reaction against the excessive ritualism of the Brahmans, has always dispensed with external worship. We can easily conceive the religions of Mohammed and Confucius as without mosques or pagodas. Buddhism probably had convents long before it built temples. At Rome itself, seventeen centuries ago, there flourished a sect already numerous, whose partisans and adversaries agreed in saying that it had neither temples nor altars nor images.* So it was regarded as atheistical. It must be acknowledged that the sect has acquitted itself well since then. In any case, the affirmation of the Comtist writer is already contradicted by the facts. Not only have we Protestant theologians, more or less orthodox, who are endeavoring to reconcile the doctrine of evolution with faith in the Christian revelation, but we can point to liberal and even Unitarian congregations in America and England, whose whole theology consists in Mr. Spencer's religious conception, and who do not hesitate to avow the fact. If Mr. Harrison will take the pains to visit them, he will see that, even after all the old theological formulas have been given up, the Unknowable can serve as the foundation of a worship, without being reduced to the formula and symbol of $x^x$.

But these disciples of Spencer, by developing the religious consequences of his doctrine, have made up for his silence on perhaps the only point in which he exposes his flank to the attacks of Comtism. Feeling that the flaw in the armor is revealed here, Mr. Harrison keeps on reiterating the charge, and reproaching his adversary with having forgotten that religion necessarily includes a moral discipline. We believe it is inexact to assume

* Minutius Felix, Octav, pp. 10, 32.

that morals is an original element of religion, but it incontestably, by the progress of ideas, has become an essential one. In reducing religion to a sort of mystic contemplation, Mr. Spencer has left out those moral sentiments and practical applications which, according to the just remark of Mr. Harrison, are the real sphere of religious activity. Evolution confides to science the task of formulating the laws of ethics, or, in more general terms, the principles of the true, the good, and the beautiful. But does Science, which addresses itself exclusively to the reason, possess a sufficient sanction to guarantee, under all circumstances, the triumph of those laws over the appetites or the passions of the individual, when once the commandment of a divine revelator or the categorical imperative of Kantian morals has been replaced by the simple suggestions of plain interest? It is, we believe, in sentiment, as Comte and his disciples declare, that must be sought the mainsprings of duty, of devotion, of the spirit of sacrifice, and of all the virtues which, perhaps, yet more than mental progress, make up the grandeur of the individual and the strength of societies.

What is this sentiment, which, to attain its end completely, must represent our deepest and most intense aspirations? Worship of Humanity, replies Mr. Harrison, following Comte. But humanity can not isolate itself from Nature, and Nature itself is simply the phenomenal manifestation of the Supreme Energy. Mr. Spencer has already said, in his first studies of sociology, that nothing like humanity can remove, save temporarily, the idea of a power of which humanity is the feeble and fugitive product, a power which, under ever-changing manifestations, existed long before humanity, and which will continue to manifest itself under other forms when humanity shall be no more.

It remains to examine whether the contemplation of this power can provoke in us sentiments that will practically affect our conduct. The response can only be affirmative, provided we consent, with Mr. Spencer, to regard the laws which reason discovers in the moral as well as in the physical world as modes of the Unknowable. Comte has defined religion as the state of spiritual unity resulting from the convergence of all our thoughts and all our acts toward the service of humanity. How much stronger and more efficacious would this state of spiritual unity become if, instead of resting exclusively on the necessary relations of men, it based itself on the sum of our relations with the Universe, and if, while retaining as its object the reign of justice or happiness in human society, it enveloped that object in the broader end of the conformity of our conduct with the action of the power "other than ourselves, which labors to put order into the world," or, as Matthew Arnold defines it in his felicitous and celebrated formula, "the Power not ourselves, that makes for righteousness"!

But is not this to attribute to the Unknowable an object, a design, a will—attributes absolutely incompatible with the unconditioned and the infinite? Is it not, in short, to return to the doctrine of final causes which has been proscribed by Evolution?

We may answer that, if modern science has cast discredit on the old system of final causes, it has not, it appears, prohibited us from assigning a certain end to the evolution of the Universe taken as a whole; that the tendency toward this end, aside from knowing whether it is conscious or not, intelligent or not, is easily substantiated by the numberless indications of a gradual progress in the development of nature as well as of humanity; and that this tendency toward a determined end contra-

dicts the system of evolution only in so far as it may be copied after the manifestations of our volitional activity. If a person holds that the notions of object, end, tendency, and predetermination are derived from our subjective experiences, we should observe—as Mr. Spencer has done of our notion of force, deduced from the muscular effort—that we are constrained to think of external energy in terms borrowed from our consciousness of internal energy, and that there is nothing to prevent our seeing equally in the notions thus formed the simple symbol of the reality. The essential point is not to forget that here also the Unknowable should be superior and not inferior to our broadest conception of the human faculties.

We have, however, no need at this time to go beyond Mr. Spencer's written thought. He affirms that the laws of Nature are the modes of action of the Unknowable, and that the most important of them, the law of evolution, tends, in the existing Universe, to equilibrium, harmony, and co-ordination, which is interpreted in the moral world by a more complete submission to the injunctions of duty, by the introduction of more justice into the relations of men; in short, by the gradual realization of the conditions necessary to the constant progress of the individual and of society. The more, then, man is conscious of his relations with the Unknowable, and the more he comprehends the solidarity that binds all parts of the Universe, chiefly the members of humanity, the more he will grasp the importance of his modest part in the great drama of Evolution, and the more he will feel inclined to follow the elevated aspirations of his nature, regarded as the expressions of the Eternal Energy, which, if the philosophy of Mr. Spencer is not a vain illusion, is leading us toward a better future.

Thus the religion of the Unknowable assimilates to

itself an ultimate factor which is found in all religions; the desire of uniting one's self with the object of worship, or, at least, of conforming to the rules that proceed from it. Mr. Spencer seems himself to have comprehended the necessity of this extension, if we may judge from a letter which he addressed last year to one of his most earnest disciples in the United States, the Rev. M. J. Savage, a Unitarian minister, in which he felicitated him on having clearly brought out the religious and ethical sides of evolutionary doctrines.

On the other hand, the resources which the religious spirit discovers in the doctrine of the Unknowable have struck even some of Mr. Harrison's co-religionists, who, less bound, perhaps, to the letter of Positivist tradition, have recognized the necessity of giving a broader and more solid support to the worship of Humanity. As Mr. William Frey, an American Comtist, wrote to the Boston "Index" in 1882, the strong feeling which the Comtists experience toward humanity can only become deeper and more intense if they regard it as a mediator between men and the Unknowable, because there will come into play the strongest cord of the religious sentiment—the aspiration of man toward the Infinite.

We should not be surprised at the influence, amounting to a kind of fascination, which the philosophy of Mr. Spencer exercises over an increasing portion of the Anglo-Saxon public. Whether true or false, complete or incomplete, it unquestionably represents the vastest and grandest synthesis that human genius has produced for a long time. After having embraced in succession all the phases of cosmical evolution, all the degrees of organic, sensible, intellectual, and social development, we could foresee that the eminent thinker would enter the domain of religious ideas to inquire into the application of his general

law there. We have seen by what conclusions, at once sympathetic and original, his views, in this regard, trench upon nearly all the systems that have issued from the contemporaneous scientific movement.

In 1860 Mr. Laugel called him the last of the English metaphysicians. Mr. Spencer would no more accept this designation now than then. It is nevertheless true that his doctrine of the Unknowable, as Mr. Harrison asserts, is, before everything, of theology, and that in his hands the evolution of Religion becomes the religion of Evolution. The future alone can tell what lot is reserved for this conception, which is doubtlessly not new in itself, but which, for the first time, perhaps, is presented to us as the logical and indispensable complement of a system exclusively based on Positivist methods.

# SYNOPSIS OF THE CARDINAL PRINCIPLES OF THE SYNTHETIC PHILOSOPHY AS STATED BY ITS AUTHOR.

"1. THROUGHOUT the universe in general and in detail, there is an unceasing redistribution of matter and motion.

"2. This redistribution constitutes evolution where there is a predominant integration of matter and dissipation of motion, and constitutes dissolution where there is a predominant absorption of motion and disintegration of matter.

"3. Evolution is simple when the process of integration, or the formation of a coherent aggregate, proceeds uncomplicated by other processes.

"4. Evolution is compound when, along with this primary change from an incoherent to a coherent state, there go on secondary changes due to differences in the circumstances of the different parts of the aggregate.

"5. These secondary changes constitute a transformation of the homogeneous into the heterogeneous—a transformation which, like the first, is exhibited in the universe as a whole and in all (or nearly all) its details: in the aggregate of stars and nebulæ; in the planetary system; in the earth as an inorganic mass; in each organism, vegetal or animal (Von Baer's law); in the aggregate of

organisms throughout geologic time; in the mind; in society; in all products of social activity.

"6. The process of integration, acting locally as well as generally, combines with the process of differentiation to render this change not simply from homogeneity to heterogeneity, but from an indefinite homogeneity to a definite heterogeneity; and this trait of increasing definiteness, which accompanies the trait of increasing heterogeneity, is, like it, exhibited in the totality of things and in all its divisions and subdivisions down to the minutest.

"7. Along with this redistribution of the matter composing any evolving aggregate, there goes on a redistribution of the retained motion of its components in relation to one another: this also becomes, step by step, more definitely heterogeneous.

"8. In the absence of a homogeneity that is infinite and absolute, that redistribution of which evolution is one phase, is inevitable. The causes which necessitate it are these:—

"9. The instability of the homogeneous, which is consequent upon the different exposures of the different parts of any limited aggregate to incident forces. The transformations hence resulting are complicated by—

"10. The multiplication of effects. Every mass and part of a mass on which a force falls, sub-divides and differentiates that force, which thereupon proceeds to work a variety of changes; and each of these becomes the parent of similarly-multiplying changes: the multiplication of them becoming greater in proportion as the aggregate becomes more heterogeneous. And these two causes of increasing differentiations are furthered by—

"11. Segregation, which is a process tending ever to separate unlike units and to bring together like units—so

serving continually to sharpen, or make definite, differentiations otherwise caused.

"12. Equilibration is the final result of these transformations which an evolving aggregate undergoes. The changes go on until there is reached an equilibrium between the forces which all parts of the aggregate are exposed to and the forces these parts oppose to them. Equilibration may pass through a transition stage of balanced motions (as in a planetary system) or of balanced functions (as in a living body) on the way to ultimate equilibrium; but the state of rest in inorganic bodies, or death in organic bodies, is the necessary limit of the changes constituting evolution.

"13. Dissolution is the counter-change which sooner or later every evolved aggregate undergoes. Remaining exposed to surrounding forces that are unequilibrated, each aggregate is ever liable to be dissipated by the increase, gradual or sudden, of its contained motion; and its dissipation, quickly undergone by bodies lately animate and slowly undergone by inanimate masses, remains to be undergone at an indefinitely remote period by each planetary and stellar mass, which, since an indefinitely distant period in the past, has been slowly evolving: the cycle of its transformations being thus completed.

"14. This rhythm of evolution and dissolution, completing itself during short periods in small aggregates, and in the vast aggregates distributed through space completing itself in periods which are immeasurable by human thought, is, so far as we can see, universal and eternal—each alternating phase of the process predominating now in this region of space and now in that, as local conditions determine.

"15. All these phenomena, from their great features down to their minutest details, are necessary results of

the persistence of force, under its forms of matter and motion. Given these as distributed through space, and their quantities being unchangeable, either by increase or decrease, there inevitably result the continuous redistributions distinguishable as evolution and dissolution, as well as all those special traits above enumerated.

"16. That which persists unchanging in quantity but ever changing in form, under these sensible appearances which the universe presents to us, transcends human knowledge and conception—is an unknown and unknowable power, which we are obliged to recognize as without limit in space, and without beginning or end in time."

# A POSITIVIST RELIGIOUS SERVICE.

A WRITER in an English newspaper, who had visited the Little Bethel of the Comteists to witness the services on the eve of the *fête* of the founder of the new religion, thus describes what he saw: "When I entered, Dr. Congreve was reading the service for the day. He had an audience of some thirty persons, several of them young ladies who had evidently come to be startled. The sermon was preached by Mr. Crompton. If he is a 'priest' of the new dispensation, he wears no clerical attire. Perhaps the year 96 of the Comteist era (for they have, like the French Republic, their own era) is too early for the invention of sacerdotal robes. The preacher came to a desk draped in red baize, and for a half-hour poured forth a rhapsody upon Auguste Comte, Clothilde de Vaux, progress, order, unity, and love, which was chiefly remarkable for the free use of Christian language to set forth a faith (if it can be called a faith) antagonistic to Christianity. The poor wife of Comte, who left him, was dismissed with a word of scorn for one who was incapable of sharing the honors of greatness; and Clothilde, the mistress, was extolled to the skies for her devotion to her distinguished lover. Comte and Clothilde were declared to be the two greatest people who had visited this earth; and the peroration was a sort of ascription to them. It was startling to hear the organ, as the preacher sat

down, peal forth that beautiful phrase from Mendelssohn's 'Elijah' so often heard as a Kyrie, and associated in the oratorio with the words 'Bend down from heaven and grant us thy peace. Help, Lord, thy servants; help, O God!' Dr. Congreve then rose and said, 'Let us pray.' Everybody stood. 'We praise thee, Humanity,' said Dr. Congreve, 'as for all thy servants, so especially for Auguste Comte; and we pray that, in proof of our gratitude, we may become thy more willing and complete servants.' The prayer went on to talk of 'the queen of our devotion, the lady of our loving service, the one center of all our being, the one bond of all ages, the one shelter for all the families of mankind, the one foundation of a truly catholic church. To thee be all honor and glory. Amen!' Then came a parody of the benediction given in the name of Humanity: 'The peace of her slowly dawning kingdom be upon you, the blessing of Humanity abide with you, now and forever.' The organ played again, and the little audience departed."—*Popular Science Monthly.*

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